Northeast FL Travel Guide
by Vacation Rental Pros

St. Augustine
Palm Coast
Flagler Beach
Ponte Vedra
Jacksonville
and lots, lots more.
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Welcome!

VACATION RENTAL PROS’ TRAVEL GUIDE FOR NORTHEAST FLORIDA

Our greatest compliment is when our guests refer us to their friends and relatives. Over the past ten years, guests and their great "word of mouth" have helped us expand to over 600 vacation rentals. To return the favor, we’ve put together this travel guide to share our best-kept vacation secrets around the region.

From St. Augustine to Flagler Beach, Ponte Vedra to Palm Coast, we hope this guide serves up dozens of ideas for your perfect and relaxing vacation. If you can’t quite fit everything in this time, we hope to see you back! (With children, pets, friends, family, for Christmas or an August long weekend – there’s something for everyone, whatever your age or interests).

We’d love to hear your feedback about the guide book and which restaurant, day trip or local attraction becomes the highlight of your time in northeast Florida. Enjoy!

Vacation Rental Pros
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(855) 881-9423
Planning your trip

Northeast Florida’s top 10

What you must see, eat or do

- **Tour old St. Augustine** on foot, horse, bike, trolley, train or Segway (page 17). Then, head across the Bridge of Lions to climb to the top of **St. Augustine Lighthouse** (page 59)

- Drive up or down the **scenic A1A highway**, finding your new favorite beach (page 152)

- Spend an afternoon looking for **right whales, dolphins or manatees** – preferably from an ocean- or water-front bar or restaurant (details throughout the guidebook)

- Get local: go shopping at a **local farmers’ market** (pages 29, 53, 107 and 138). Then, make time for **The Florida Agricultural Museum**. It sounds boring, but it’s brilliant! (Page 78)

- See the **St. Augustine Pirate and Treasure Museum** (page 24)

- Book a **Ripple Effect Eco-tour** (page 65). If you have more time, try a new water-sport - anything goes! (details throughout the guidebook)

- Visit the **Castillo de San Marcos** (page 22)

- **Hunt for sharks’ teeth** – they’re older than you think (page 54) – or search for something special at **St. Johns Town Center**, an upscale pedestrian mall (page 162)

- Spend a day at **Anastasia State Park** (page 58) or consider ‘**Tai Chi By The Sea**’ at Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area (page 104)

- Have a day to spare for something off the beach? Our top pick for a perfect day-trip is the **Kennedy Space Center** (page 147)
Airports

★ DAYTONA BEACH (DAB)

Just 30 miles from St. Augustine, DAB is the closest airport – a convenience for which you can expect to pay extra. More beach time, though?

★ JACKSONVILLE AIRPORT (JAX)

Slightly further away, JAX is approximately 75 miles from St. Augustine but it’s an easy highway-drive down US 95. As a bigger city airport, it’s simple to navigate and is a destination for low-cost carriers like Air Train, Southwest and Jet Blue. You’re likely to get a good car rental rate as well.

★ ORLANDO AIRPORT (MCO)

Arrive at MCO from just about anywhere – this is the biggest airport in the region, so you might get both a direct flight and a good rental car price. That said, it is a longer drive to the coast – about an hour and a half, or 95 miles.

Weather and climate

SEASONS, AIR AND OCEAN TEMPERATURES

While just as sunny and equally palm treed as the rest of the state, Northern Florida has seasons. (A local joke maintains that these include 49 weeks of summer). Using Jacksonville’s
averages as a reference point – a January day might be 68°F, whereas you’ll look for the ice cream van in July as it nears 90°F (try ‘The Waffle Cone’ in Flagler Beach, page 115).

While winter doesn’t mean a white Christmas, you’d need a full wetsuit and a fair amount of grit to swim in the Atlantic come December. Rest assured, though, there’s so much to do here, year-round. Even when it’s colder there are hundreds of activities besides lying on the beach. (Perhaps golf, golf, and more golf, if that’s your thing?).

Spring and autumn are both quieter, as school is in session, and are blissfully free of humidity. No matter the ambient temperature, many accommodations offer hot tubs or heated pools.

Summertime is the Florida you expect – sunny scorchers! The Atlantic heats up a little, too. If coming at this time of year, you’ll want to be sensible when sightseeing or spending time outside – all the clever stuff about drinking enough water, sunscreen, etcetera.
St. Augustine & area beaches.
St. Augustine (old town)

- Introduction
- History
- City basics
- Tours and exploring
- Suggested sights and itineraries
- Restaurants
- Nightlife
- St. Augustine at Christmas

Introduction

Two hours north of the world’s biggest collection of theme parks, St. Augustine is hard to believe. For starters, neither golden arches nor skyscrapers dominate its skyline. Instead? Trees and a lighthouse. Spanish moss might obscure a view – but billboards won’t.

While St. Augustine has tourism on every street, substance outweighs sideshow ten to one. Here, tours and trolley buses are actively encouraged – yes, join the crowd! - there’s so much to share. Forget textbook history, this pretty city does it better.

Setting a vacation standard are brick-paved streets, which invite you to explore on foot. You’ll soon slow to a St. Augustine pace. Should you do nothing in town but sit on a bench, you’ll do so in the company of vibrant bougainvillea, antique fountains and clipped box hedges, with a wealth of architecture on every side.

Ready to choose your own old town adventure? As any guidebook should, we’ve aimed to provide an equal measure of “Go here, tourist!” and “Shh, sneak in there and pretend you’re a local”. If itinerary possibilities overwhelm, the city’s friendly residents will be happy to see you back again.
History

Fifty-five years ago the Beatles didn’t exist and space flight remained a crazy idea. It’s a lifetime ago. Yet that’s how much earlier St. Augustine was founded before the Pilgrims landed in Massachusetts. Wait – what?!

**St. Augustine?**

Somewhere in the back of your mind, you have a 3rd Grade recollection of a guy named Ponce and his Fountain of Youth. That’s where our textbooks ended, how about yours? It’s time to fill in the gaps. Plenty has happened in St. Augustine in the nearly 450 years since then – stories you won’t believe.

- **1513:** Juan Ponce de León arrives in the region, claiming it for Spain.
- **1562:** The French arrive! Things get multi-culti....
- **1565:** St. Augustine is properly founded and gets its name from Augustine of Hippo.
- **1586:** The English get involved, and Sir Francis Drake sets the city on fire.
- **1672:** Spanish rulers are by now sick of attack – they start building the Castillo de San Marcos (page 22).
- **1738:** Fort Mose is established as the first community of legally freed former slaves.
- **1763:** Post-war wheeling and dealing means the British get St. Augustine... for now.
- **1783:** Another post-war treaty (another war) returns the city to Spanish control.
- **1821:** For the first time, the city becomes American-controlled. Are you keeping count? That’s Spanish, French, British... Spanish... and American.
- **1880s:** Henry Flagler arrives in the region with money to burn. Soon, he’s building hotels, hospitals and infrastructure. This back-water region becomes an up-market tourist destination.
- **1908:** The St. Augustine Alligator Farm opens, sure proof of the tourism boom.

### St. Augustine to...

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville</td>
<td>45 miles</td>
<td>50 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ponte Vedra Beach</td>
<td>30 miles</td>
<td>35-45 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Coast</td>
<td>25 miles</td>
<td>40 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>105 miles</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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* Using shortest route available, not necessarily the most scenic.
• **1925**: The Bridge of Lions is built – connecting the mainland to Anastasia Island.

• **1963**: St. Augustine is very much part of the Civil Rights Movement, with ongoing protests.

• **2013-2014**: 500 year anniversary. Many events are planned – will you be lucky enough to enjoy them? See www.StAugustine.com for details and start planning!

## City basics

### SAFETY

Of course, you’d take caution anywhere you’re unfamiliar – especially at night. That said, St. Augustine is a city that depends on its thriving tourism industry and much is done to ensure its visitors enjoy a safe trip. A busy, pedestrian downtown means your biggest concerns after dark will likely be the ghosts on your walking tour.

### PARKING

• **Pay parking – Historic Downtown Parking Facility (HDPF)**: The $10/day fee is not prorated, but this might make sense if you’re arriving in the morning. It’s the most convenient option if you’re coming into town for sightseeing, as the Visitor Information Center is here, as well as the two main train/trolley tour companies.

• **Free parking (with purchase) - Old Jail**: If you like the sound of the Old Town Trolley, they sweeten the deal by including all-day parking with your ticket.

• **Metered and other parking**: If you’ve got the patience, there’s a spot out there waiting for you. Try Avenida Menendez between the Fort and the Bridge of Lions. Just coming in for dinner? Street parking is free after 5 p.m. If you’d enjoy a quick stroll, you’ll find free parking just five or so blocks into nearby neighborhoods. (Be sure to double-check any signs before walking away!)

• **Handicapped parking**: See [this PDF map](http://example.com) to find the most convenient spot to your destination.
LIMITED MOBILITY

If a “very walkable” city isn’t the best news you’ve ever heard – don’t worry. Simply book a trolley tour (with free parking) and navigate that way. One of the tour companies offers wheelchair accessible tours, and our equipment rentals section (page 73) provides contacts for renting motorized scooters. Trolley tours bisect popular St. George Street, with benches and rest-stops along the length of the mile-long street. You can walk as much or as little as you like.

When does it get busy?

Summer is high season for every corner of Florida, though any calendar event sees an increase in visitors – whether Daytona Race Week, Easter or schools’ spring break. If you prefer streets all to yourself, try the cooler months from October through to February (with the exception of the Christmas holiday of lights).

PETS

St. Augustine prides itself on being a very pet-friendly city (you’ll notice dogs’ water bowls outside shops). Many (but not all) restaurants with outside dining accept well-behaved dogs. Keep in mind the heat of the day, though, when planning any sight-seeing activities with your dog. While the winter months will suit him well, pavements get very hot and you can’t guarantee there’ll be shade available at your destination. In all the listings that follow we’ve designated particularly pet-friendly spots – just remember the leash and water!

See page 37 for dog park details and other contacts you might need – like doggie daycare should you head out on a day trip.

For more tips about traveling with your dog:
see our ‘Emily Paws’ Travel Manner Tips
Get your bearings - tours and exploring

Finally, a history lesson in the sun (and, if planned well, with a beer or some chocolate on the side). No matter how long you’re visiting St. Augustine (and especially if it’s a quick trip), you’ll get more out of it with a starter tour. Who knew you could so enjoyably cram 450 years of history in an hour? Believe it: even if you’re a dedicated DIY, “anti-tour” person, there’s an option you’ll absolutely love.

Exploring St. Augustine on foot

★ ST. AUGUSTINE CITY WALKS (GUIDED)

There’s never been a more interesting way to see a city and get some exercise. Decide your group’s main interests and there’s a tour to match, whether the Plaza Stroll, culinary tour or pub crawl, a Creepy Crawl ghost tour or – truly something for everyone – the History, Mystery, Mayhem and Murder tour. Some tours are offered in Spanish as well.

- Website: www.staugustinecitywalks.com
- Address: Departure locations vary by tour
- Pets: Many tours are pet-friendly, check website for details
- Keep in mind: Is it raining? We love this outlook – “There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriately dressed people.”

WALK AND EXPLORE ON YOUR OWN

- Download the City Walking Guide (free)

Download this free walking guide (PDF) to your iPad or iPhone, or print it and stash it in your bag – it’ll easily fill any spare time you have, whether you do the whole 25-stop tour, or just a section.
• **Evening walk**

Ditch the car. Seriously. No matter where you’re staying, come into St. Augustine for a spontaneous evening of exploration on foot. See our parking tips (page 11) and a few ideas of what to do at night (page 45). Might it include sangria?

• **St. George Street**

Though cross-streets allow cars, St. George Street itself is for your two legs only. Kids will love it! Offerings are heavily skewed to the tourist market, but if you can’t beat them – join in with an ice cream and happy doses of window-shopping.

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**Cycling St. Augustine**

While great for pedestrians, St. Augustine is a very welcoming city to cyclists as well. Bike lines exist on some streets, with ongoing additions.

• **Why bike?**

With such great, sunny weather – why not make your own pedal-powered air-conditioning?

• **What happens if you change your mind?**

The local bus service, ‘the Sunshine Bus’, has bike racks – so you can avoid biking the Bridge of Lions and still end up where you want to be. Tickets are just a dollar per ride.

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**RENTING A BIKE**

See the chapter’s end (page 73) for all rental details including beach cruisers and road bikes. Also available: family-sized pedicabs (children and pet-friendly), and a Florida invention, a gas-powered “ScootCoupe”. Use it for exercise, sightseeing, and a nice way to add a breeze to your beach sunset.
Tours on wheels

TRAIN AND TROLLEY TOURS

There’s no better way to gain your bearings on first arrival than to take a tour. Whether you use it to quickly circle the city and decide what to visit in-person, or as a means of transportation over a few days – you’ll easily get your money’s worth. In most cases you’ll get a better deal by booking ahead online. Don’t forget to dress warmly in the winter – these are open vehicles and there’ll be a breeze.

★ GOLD CITY HISTORY TOURS

Eco-friendly electric vehicles and very small group size (8 people max). Great for kids, interesting for teens and a good use of rainy days. This smaller vehicle means great access. This is a tour-tour; ride around once and you’re done.

- Website: www.staugustinegoldtours.com
- Address: Departs from 31 Orange Street
- Children: Discounted children’s tickets
- Keep in mind: By reservation only

Hop-on/hop-off tours

You’ve got two choices for the city bus tour – a trolley or a train. In truth, there’s not much between them. Take a look at their websites and make a quick decision – you could hum and haw all day but prices and itineraries really don’t differ very much.

Top tips for tours:

- **Got back problems?** Both options have hard plastic seats that might jostle you. You might have a smoother ride sitting up front.

- **Don’t like the driver?** Hop off, friend. Another one will be along in 15 minutes or so.
★ OLD TOWN TROLLEY TOURS OF ST. AUGUSTINE

(Green and orange). Trolley tickets are valid for 3 days and make 22 stops – ideal if you plan to take your time digging around town. It’s also a good way to get around if you’d rather not walk (or it’s hot). Free parking is included with your ticket and the trolleys boast strong reviews & great customer service.

- Website: http://www.trolleytours.com/st-augustine
- Address: Board at the Old Jail (167 San Marco Ave)
- Children: Free for kids 6 and under, with discounts for 6-12s.
- Pets: Guide dogs only
- Keep in mind: Two trolleys are wheelchair-accessible. Call ahead for times.

★ ST. AUGUSTINE SIGHTSEEING TRAINS

(The ‘red trains’). Run by Ripley’s, the bright red trains look like a more commercial operation and will probably appeal more to kids. 1-, 3- and 5-day passes are available, which give you access to discounts at various city outlets. They offer bundle deals for the Ripley’s Museum and mini-golf if they’re on your itinerary. In addition, there are Sunset Tours and Black History Tours – plus the ubiquitous ghost tour.

- Website: http://www.ripleys.com/redtrains
- Address: 170 San Marco Ave, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Discount for children
- Pets: Well-behaved small dogs (under 15 pounds)
- Keep in mind: Half-off for military
SOMETHING A BIT DIFFERENT

Want to see St. Augustine in a memorable way? Find a range of guided and self-guided tours with unconventional means of travel - horses, Segways, pedicabs and Florida ‘ScootCoupes’.

Segway tours

★ ST. AUGUSTINE SEGWAY TOURS

Long-time locals invite you behind the tourist streets of this fascinating city. Two tours daily – strap on your helmet and roll, baby.

• Website: http://www.segwaystaugustine.com
• Address: 11 Magnolia Avenue, St. Augustine, FL 32084 (Fountain of Youth)
• Children: Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult
• Keep in mind: High heels and and ‘Shape-Up’ shoes not recommended

★ SEGS BY THE SEA

A slightly self-deprecating take on their tour offerings, this company brings you the “Artsy Fartzy Tour”, amongst regular sightseeing options and a summertime night tour. If you’ve ever envied a mall-cop’s Segway steed, here’s your chance.

• Website: http://staugustinesegways.com
• Address: 93 King Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084

Weird and wonderful

★ SCOOTCOUPE RENTALS

Strange little buggy cars straight out of the Jetsons, ScootCoupes are available for hire and touring St. Augustine’s town and coast. They’re road legal and reach up to 40 mph – you’ve never seen wheels like this. GPS units provide a DIY-tour that’s part-history, part-Disney ride.

• Website: http://www.funrentals.us/saint-augustine.php
• Address: 32 San Marco Ave, St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: Each ScootCoupe has one passenger seat
• Keep in mind: Check the website for a coupon
★ PEDI CAB OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Use it as a taxi, use it as a tour – either way, it’s always nice to pay someone else to do the legwork. Founded by an entrepreneurial student at Flagler College – a great local business to support!

- Website: http://www.staugustinepedicab.com
- Keep in mind: Thurs, Fri, Sat and Sunday nights

Carriage tours

★ COUNTRY CARRIAGES

An easy option for the spontaneous – you’re able to hop into one of these carriages wherever you see one parked. Count on a tour bordering on a performance – with some drivers more into it than others.

- Website: http://countrycarriages.net
- Address: Bay-front between the fort and the bridge
- Children: Kids welcome

★ ST. AUGUSTINE TRANSFER COMPANY

This carriage company offers very small, private tours – though you need to be organized and book them in advance.

- Website: http://staugustinetransfer.com
- Children: 12 years and older
- Capacity: 1 - 4 adults
- Extras: Add an order of chocolate-covered strawberries
- Keep in mind: History and ghost tours available.
Tours by air

★ ST. AUGUSTINE AIR TOURS

Fly high in a 1930s bi-plane as you loop and roll over St. Augustine. A splurge, yes, but a memorable activity for just the two of you – especially at sunset.

- Website: http://www.staugustineairtours.com
- Address: 4900 US 1 North, St. Augustine, FL 32095
- Keep in mind: They offer a range of flights at all price brackets

Tours by boat

★ SCHOONER FREEDOM (HISTORIC)

The only ship of its kind in St. Augustine, you’ll see it from a distance and want be on board. Enjoy a day or sunset cruise aboard this 76-foot Tall Ship (or - with good timing - a Full Moon sail) with a group of up to 49 people. Kids are very welcome on the day cruise and will love imagining they’re savvy sailors, dodging blockades in the 1800s. Will you help to raise the sails, or just sit back, enjoy a drink and keep watch for dolphins?

- Website: http://www.schoonerfreedom.com
- Address: 111 Avenida Menendez, Suite. D, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: The day cruise is suited for kids
- Keep in mind: While beautiful, it can be windy during the winter. Dress appropriately for the water.

★ EL CONQUISTADOR (SPEEDBOAT THRILL RIDE)

Leave your pregnant wives and elderly parents content at the beach while you, and any thrill-seeking buddies (or teenagers), hang on tightly for this fast-as-lightning zip across St. Augustine’s water. If you’re pressed for time, you’ll see plenty during an
hour’s cruise – including the St. Augustine Pier and the Castillo de San Marcos (page 22). Fancy sightseeing at speed? You won’t go faster than this.

- Website: http://elconspeedboat.com
- Address: 111- E Avenida Menendez, Slip 73, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Four and up
- Keep in mind: Military discounts available

★ ST. AUGUSTINE SCENIC CRUISE

A slow and steady cruise, sit at tables on deck and look for dolphins. If you choose a later sailing, you get a sunset thrown in for free.

- Website: http://www.scenic-cruise.com
- Address: 4125 Coastal Hwy., St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Very family-friendly
- Pets: Pet-friendly
- Keep in mind: Check the website for coupons

Suggested itineraries

If you have 1 day...

- Morning: Take one of the above tours, and explore the Old City
- Lunch: see restaurant recommendations
- Afternoon:
  - Castillo de San Marcos (page 22)
• Your pick of any attraction on a special interest itinerary, or the Pirate Museum with kids (page 24).
• Climb to the top of the St. Augustine Lighthouse (page 59).

2 - 3 days, add...

• A watersports day (see ‘St. Augustine area outdoors’, page 65)
• Extra history
• A gluttonous day (see food tours, page 28)
• Art and architecture
• A family day (see suggestions, page 35)
• Shopping, golf, or both
Must see and do (sights and attractions)

If you like... history

TOP PICK: CASTILLO DE SAN MARCOS

A “one-size-fits-all” attraction with good views, lots of history, interests for kids, has free and paid aspects, ghost tours, self-guided tours and so on.

★ CASTILLO DE SAN MARCOS

When did you last spend day in and around the 17th Century? And everyone had a great time? A huge bay-front fort provides all the good stuff – from historical demonstrations and actors in period costume, to steep grassy hills for kids to roll down. Things go boom (cannon demos) and possibly bump in the night – on a very popular ghost tour.

- Website: http://www.nps.gov/casa/index.htm
- Address: 1 South Castillo Drive
- Children: Free entry for 15 and under
- Pets: Leashed pets allowed on the grounds but not inside the fort itself.
- Keep in mind: Free to walk around the ground, ticketed entry to the fort.
HISTORIC HOME TOURS

★ THE XIMENEZ-FATIO HOUSE

This small house from 1798 is neither well-known nor well advertised, so you’re assured of a quieter experience. This historic home tour lasts forty-five minutes and focuses on women’s history – easy to fit into your schedule whether you’re a history buff or have kids with modern attention spans.

- Website: [http://www.ximenezfatiohouse.org](http://www.ximenezfatiohouse.org)
- Address: 20 Aviles Street St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Kids welcome
- Keep in mind: Closed Sunday and Monday

★ PEÑA PECK HOUSE

In the loving care of a women’s non-profit organization, expect a very personal tour that lasts “as long as you’ve got”. The house dates to the 1750s and has lots of original furniture on display. Though on St. George street, this is a much less crowded experience than other central historic home tours.

- Website: [Peña Peck House online](http://www.ximenezfatiohouse.org)
- Address: 143 St. George St., St. Augustine FL 32084
- Keep in mind: Open daily, tours are by donation.

★ DOW MUSEUM OF HISTORIC HOUSES

If you’re short of time in St. Augustine, sail past this one. However, if you’re keen to spend a meandering afternoon and/or have keen interest for history, you’ll well and truly love the Dow Museum. Your ticket provides entrance to houses set in all eras from the 1800s towards the present. Call it a low-tech form of time travel; they’re preserved in one city block. More of a grown-ups’ museum, as small children might soon grow bored.

- Website: [http://www.moas.org/dowmuseum.html](http://www.moas.org/dowmuseum.html)
- Address: 149 Cordova Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084
GRUESOME HISTORY: BADDIES, PATIENTS AND PIRATES

★ ST. AUGUSTINE PIRATE AND TREASURE MUSEUM

Everyone’s one’s got room in a vacation for a little bit of pirate. Luckily, this is no Treasure Island kitsch but the real deal – starting with the world’s largest collection of genuine pirate artifacts. Huge production values went into their video exhibits, designed by Disney Imagineers. Allow at least ninety minutes, though you could easily spend three hours here – it’s jam-packed. This museum will equally appeal to adults and kids – the latter get a treasure hunt to solve.

• Website: http://www.thepiratemuseum.com
• Address: 12 South Castillo Dr., St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: Children of reading age or above will get the most out of this
• Keep in mind: Apple and Android visiting apps available for download

★ THE OLD JAIL

A costumed period actor performs the Old Jail’s tour – it’s perhaps best for kids or those happy enough to play along. En route, you’ll learn about things used while the jail was in service (1892-1953). This includes all manner of weapons, plus a sign of mankind’s certain progress – first gallows then the electric chair. A pricier tour that will cost you even more sleep is the Night at the Old Jail. It runs from approx. 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. and claims to invite the paranormal.

• Website: The Old Jail online
• Address: 167 San Marco Avenue, St. Augustine

★ SPANISH MILITARY AND HOSPITAL MUSEUM

History buffs, come on in – the rest of you, keep walking. Allow forty-five minutes for a tour covering colonial surgery techniques and old-time remedies. Kids with the history bug will find it interesting, though it’s not set up to be a children’s museum (and the ward rooms are macabre).

• Website: http://www.spanishmilitaryhospitalmuseum.com
• Address: 3 Aviles Street, St. Augustine, FL
• Children: See explanation above.
• Pets: Yes! Pets welcome.
• Keep in mind: Check website for printable coupon.
OTHER HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS

★ OLDEST WOODEN SCHOOL HOUSE

Of possible interest if your kids need a reminder how good they’ve got it. It’s on St. George Street so you will be passing by. A quick visit, unless you have a teacher in the family, with a peaceful garden courtyard outside.

- Website: www.oldestwoodenschoolhouse.com
- Address: 14 St. George Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Keep in mind: Self-guided tours only.

★ FORT MOSE

(Pronounced Moh-Say). A side-note to history, a small museum marks the spot where America’s first freed slaves began their new lives. An audio tour accompanies you around an open field site, once the location of this community. On a nice day it’s an especially enjoyable stroll along the boardwalk.

- Website: www.floridastateparks.org/fortmose
- Address: 15 Fort Mose Trail, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: There’s nothing for them to ‘do’ as such, except run around
- Pets: Leashed pets are welcome
If you like architecture, art & design

★ FLAGLER COLLEGE

Opened in the 1880s as Henry Flagler’s, sorry, flagship hotel, this arty tour will be of huge appeal if you’re into period architecture and interior design. To totally name-drop, you’ll tour a huge collection of ‘Louis Comfort Tiffany’ lampshades and stained glass, with murals and ornate details throughout. Allow about an hour.

• Website: http://legacy.flagler.edu
• Address: 74 King St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: $1 for children under the age of 12 (includes a coloring book)
• Keep in mind: Free guided tours daily

★ LIGHTNER MUSEUM

Another of Henry Flagler’s former hotels, this one lives and breathes Victoriana. Expect to see anything and everything 19th Century, including natural history exhibits, more Tiffany glass, plus art and statues galore. A kids’ scavenger hunt really turns the experience around – what child would otherwise get excited about antiques? If coming at lunch-time, don’t miss Café Alcazar (page 41).

• Website: http://www.lightnermuseum.org
• Address: 75 King St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: Under 12 free – must be accompanied by an adult.
• Keep in mind: Self-guided tour. If you can’t get enough art, see our Jacksonville day trip details on page 161.

★ VILLA ZORAYDA MUSEUM

Walk yourself around this replica Moorish Castle with an audio tour that identifies a fine art collection from all over the world. If you’re on the fence about visiting, you get free all-day parking with admission.

• Website: http://www.villazorayda.com
• Address: 83 King Street St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: Lots of breakables, maybe avoid.
• Keep in mind: Photography is prohibited, as are food and drinks.

★ FIRST FRIDAY ARTWALKS - ART GALLERIES OF SAINT AUGUSTINE

With good timing and a healthy interest in art, you could be trotting off on a self-guided tour of twenty-five local galleries for free. (A free trolley gets you there faster). The first Friday evening of the month, every month.

• Website: http://www.artgalleriesofstaugustine.com
• Keep in mind: If you’ll miss a First Friday, download the PDF map on their website and choose a few to visit on your own.

If you like... beer and wine

★ ST. AUGUSTINE PUB CRAWL

"The best way to explore history is to walk right through it." So say the organizers, though it seems they’ve paraphrased... because you’ll drink your way through it. Stop at four historic pubs with a group of new friends and enjoy a drink (microbrew or wine) at each, included with your ticket.
• Website: http://staugustinepubcrawl.com
• Address: 23 Orange St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: Younger teens welcome on private tours, 18-20 year olds can join group tours.
• Keep in mind: Book in advance, it’s a popular ticket.

★ SAN SEBASTIAN WINERY

Over the course of hour you’ll tour the entire production set-up, including the bottling line (everyone’s favorite mechanized mystery), before ending up in the tasting room. If you’d rather skip the tour and head straight to the good stuff, there’s the rooftop ‘Cellar Upstairs’ with live jazz (open Friday nights and weekends).

• Website: http://www.sansebastianwinery.com
• Address: 157 King St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Keep in mind: Tours are free

★ MILE MARKER BREWING

A small craft-brew operation with big taste. Visit the tap room to try the full line, or arrange a private brewery tour. Live music and ‘Barbeque Bill’ offer further incentive to visit on occasional nights – check the website for details. Why not try: ‘Mile Marker 70’, a “chocolaty, malty brew with just a hint of coconut”.

• Website: http://www.milemarkerbrewing.com
• Address: 3420 Agricultural Center Dr, St. Augustine, FL 32092
• Keep in mind: Closed Mondays

If you like... fine food

FOOD AND WINE TOURS

★ THE SAVORY FAIRE TASTING TOURS

Live to eat, at least for one night. This palate-pleasing company offers a range of tours to make sure you’re matched with your absolute favorite foods. Whether that’s the ‘Wine, Chocolate & Cheese’ option, a ‘Micro Pub & Craft Beer Tour’ or a filling
‘Specialty Food & Wine Tasting Tour’, you’ll roll home as happy as a stuffed pig. To combine another St. Augustine aspect, you can do the tour by carriage ride.

- Website: http://thetastingtours.com
- Address: 6 Granada Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Welcome on private tours of four or more, otherwise must be 21 for group tours.
- Keep in mind: Advanced reservations required

CHOCOLATE TOURS

★ TOUR DE CHOCOLATE

This tour is pitched as part St. Augustine history, part chocolate. Frankly, the names itself sells us – but if you need a quick fix, you might be better off hitting the retail shops. Recommended for serious chocolate buffs who want to know why it tastes so good.

- Website: http://www.staugustinecitywalks.com/tourdechocolate/index.html
- Address: 23 Orange Street
- Keep in mind: Online booking discount.

★ WHETSTONE CHOCOLATE FACTORY TOUR

Would you wear a hairnet... if you got to spend an hour in a chocolate factory? A tasting tour that goes behind-the-scenes of Whetstone’s process. Yes, it winds up in the gift shop; will you mind?

- Website: http://www.whetstonechocolates.com
- Address: 139 King Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Free under 5.
- Keep in mind: Reservations recommended.

FARMS AND FARMERS’ MARKETS

★ ST. AUGUSTINE U-PICK FARM

A hydroponic farm where strawberries are grown in stacked pots, so you’ll neither get dirty nor need to bend down for picking. Tours can be arranged for keen gardeners, call to make inquiries. Herbs and seasonal produce are also available.

- Website: St. Augustine U-Pick online
If you like...to shop

OUTLET SHOPPING

★ PREMIUM OUTLETS
Eighty-five stores make the trip up I-95 worthwhile. Every ‘mall staple’ is here - Banana Republic, Brooks Brothers, J.Crew, and more Tommy Bahama shirts than you can wear in a lifetime.

- Website: http://www.premiumoutlets.com
- Address: 2700 Florida 16, St. Augustine, FL 32092 (west of I-95)

★ PRIME OUTLETS

Have just as much fun all over again, on the opposite side of the highway. A recent expansion and renovation now houses high-end brands including Saks and Gucci.

- Website: http://www.primeoutlets.com
- Address: 2700 Florida 16, St. Augustine, FL 32092 (west of I-95)

IN-TOWN HIGHLIGHTS

St. Augustine enjoys a thriving farmers’ market community, and a great sense of ‘what’s local is best’. Enjoy browsing small, independent shops for bits and pieces you won’t find anywhere else. Some highlights include:

★ PLUM ART GALLERY

- Offering: “Contemporary regional works of art”.
- Website: http://www.plumartgallery.com
- Address: 9 Aviles St., St. Augustine FL, 32084

★ HICKORY RIDGE ORGANICS

- Offering: Soaps & make-up “fresh, organic, vegan, chemical and GMO free!”
- Website: http://www.hickoryridgeorganics.net
- Address: 106 St. George Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084

★ SIMPLE GESTURES MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

- Offering: Basically it’s Etsy in a shop. Art, home goods, jewelry, etc.
- Website: Simple Gestures Facebook
- Address: 4 White St. East & Anastasia Blvd., Saint Augustine, FL
★ THE OLD DRUG STORE

Presented as a living-history museum, instead, visit the Old Drug Store for the shop it wants to be. Bored relatives can order ice cream next door, as you take a half hour or more to peruse their range of home remedies, jewelry, teas and other gift shop items.

- Website: http://www.shop.oldcityremedies.com
- Address: 31 Orange Street, St. Augustine, FL

If you like... tourism mainstays

★ FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Go if: you learned about Ponce de León in school, and the story caught your childhood imagination. (Or - you have kids and they could use the ‘history brought to life’ stuff). Otherwise, we’re going to align the words ‘tourist’ and ‘trap’ in a sentence, and leave it at that. Signs of improvement are promising, though, as the city approaches its 450-year anniversary and focus turns towards education over fairly weak entertainment.

- Website: http://www.fountainofyouthflorida.com/index.php
- Address: 11 Magnolia Ave., St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Keep in mind: A cannon demonstration happens every hour daily.

★ RIPLEY’S BELIEVE IT OR NOT

If you want to see things you can’t believe, watch YouTube. If you want to pay for things you can’t believe, there’s Ripley’s. Go here if you need to see a manatee made from pop cans, but Blue Spring State Park has the real thing (page 159).

- Website: http://www.ripleys.com/staugustine
- Address: 19 San Marco Avenue, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Discounted ticket.
- Keep in mind: A ticket combo package is available if you’re buying ‘Red Train’ tour bus tickets (page 16).
★ ST. AUGUSTINE ALLIGATOR FARM ZOOLOGICAL PARK

Pop quiz: how many members are there in the crocodilian family? Answer - twenty-three. If you’ve ever wanted to see them all in one day, come on down to the alligator farm.

If you’re put off by scaly creatures, the park’s Wading Bird Rookery comes as highly recommended as any site in this guide. A self-described “non bird person” ranks it amongst her life’s top 10 experiences - how’s that for glowing endorsement? Visit between February and late July to see nesting pairs of herons, egrets, spoonbills and crazy feathered hairdos straight out of of a cartoon. Photography contests and updates are found at: http://www.alligatorfarm.com/rookery.

Another particular attraction is the ‘Crocodile Crossing’ zip-line tour – yep, you’ll zip over alligators. Two courses satiate speed-freaks and scaredy-cats alike.

• Website: http://www.alligatorfarm.com
• Address: 999 Anastasia Boulevard St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Children: Discounts to age 11. Zip-liners must be at least 57 inches tall and 10 years old.
• Pets: No. Don’t bring the alligators a snack.
• Keep in mind: Various discounts, plus coupons on the website
If you like... golf

★ WORLD GOLF HALL OF FAME

Live it, breathe it, now worship at the altar of golfing greats. Sticking with St. Augustine’s historical theme, you can try out an 1880s version of the game – antique club, putting green and all. Allow at least three hours for all exhibits, many of which change regularly.

- Website: http://www.worldgolfhalloffame.org
- Address: One World Golf Pl., St. Augustine, FL 32092
- Children: Discounted kids’ tickets
- Keep in mind: Disinterested family can be dispatched to the on-site IMAX® theater.

PLAYING GOLF

If you want to stick close to St. Augustine, a few course options include:

- St. Johns County Public Golf Course: http://www.sjgc.com
- World Golf Village courses (two choices) - http://www.golfwgv.com

Want more golf?
Please also see our other chapters (page 95 and 131), all of which have detailed golf course info.
Great for children and/or rainy days

★ IMAX® THEATER

When 3D dinosaurs and volcanoes are coming at your face, bigger is better. This screen is the biggest in the Southeast, so order up a popcorn to match and choose between a great selection of family movies and vivid documentaries.

• Website: http://www.worldgolfinmax.com
• Address: One World Golf Place, St. Augustine, FL 32092

★ CAROUSEL AND PLAYGROUND AT DAVENPORT PARK

This antique carousel offers vintage pricing – $1 per ride! An adjacent playground called ‘Kourtney’s Korner’ is fully wheelchair-accessible, the kind gift of her bereft parents. If you find the carousel closed due to bad weather, head inside to the library next door and enjoy a cuddly story-time together (for free!)

• Address: 180 San Marco Ave St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Keep in mind: Shaded and fully fenced

★ SPLASH PARK AT ST. AUGUSTINE PIER

Combine a beach with a playground and you have a splash park, right in front of the pier. With restrooms and a shaded picnic area just beside it – you can keep them splashing happy ‘til nap time.

• Address: 350 Beach Blvd. St. Augustine Beach, FL
• Keep in mind: Free for use and free parking!

★ LITTLE DUDES PARK (SKATEBOARDING AT TREATY PARK)

Fit your little dude (or dudette) with a helmet, file a liability waiver, and your under-12 can get to work on his/her
skateboarding skills. Print the waiver in advance if you prefer, and visit the pro shop to rent any and all equipment (or grab a snack). **Week-long skate camps** also run during the summer.

- **Website:** [St. Johns County Parks online](http://www.sjcparks.org)
- **Address:** 1595 Wildwood Drive, St. Augustine, FL 32086
- **Pets:** Paws Dog Park (fenced) also on site, see page 37 for details.

★ **BLACK RAVEN PIRATE SHIP**

Have a child with major pirate fascination? If so, a cruise on the Black Raven might fit the bill. Like the Nick Jr. show that annoys you most, you’ll have to grit your teeth through this one. Skits and singing are the bad side of amateur – though your children might be too delighted with the ship, face-painting and their new pirate hat to notice. For more pirate dealings see page 24.

- **Website:** http://www.BlackRavenAdventures.com
- **Address:** 111 Avenida Menendez, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- **Keep in mind:** See page 44 for beer and bar recommendations – you’ll need it.

★ **BOWLING AT ANASTASIA LANES**

- **Website:** http://bowlsrc.com
- **Address:** 3245 A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
- **Keep in mind:** Family packages and daily specials on the website.

**MINI-GOLF**

★ **BAYFRONT MINI-GOLF**

If you’re coming to St. Augustine for its history, make a tongue-in-cheek visit to Florida’s oldest mini-golf course.

- **Website:** http://www.ripleys.com/redtrains/bayfront-mini-golf
- **Address:** 111 Avenida Menendez, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- **Keep in mind:** $1 with the purchase of a Red Train ticket (see page 16).
★ FIESTA FALLS MINI GOLF

TPC Sawgrass might think it has a course to boast about, but does it have eight waterfalls, a replica Spanish ship and caves? Highly doubtful.

- Website: [Fiesta Falls Mini Golf online](#)
- Address: 810 A1A Beach Boulevard, St. Augustine Beach, FL 32080

★ ADVENTURE LANDING

Mini-golf, arcade, go-karts and batting cages – for the competitive family!

- Website: [http://www.adventurelanding.com/parks/st-augustine](http://www.adventurelanding.com/parks/st-augustine)
- Address: 2780 State Road 16, St. Augustine FL 32092
- Keep in mind: Daily specials and web coupons available

★ PAWS DOG PARK AT TREATY PARK

Small and large dog enclosures across three-quarters of an acre are fully fenced, and have water and shade. Big dogs can get acquainted around a mock fire hydrant.

- Website: [Treaty Dog Park online](#)
- Address: 1595 Wildwood Drive, St. Augustine, FL 32086
- Keep in mind: Open dawn to dusk

★ ANIMAL EMERGENCY HOSPITAL

- Website: [http://www.animalemergencyofstjohns.com](http://www.animalemergencyofstjohns.com)
- Address: 2505 Old Moultrie Road, St. Augustine, FL
- Keep in mind: 24 hours, 7 days a week
★ JACKSON VETERINARY HOSPITAL

- Website: http://jacksonvetpractice.vetsuite.com
- Address: 1925 A1A South, St. Augustine, FL

★ PET PARADISE

Boarding, daycare and grooming.

- Website: http://www.petparadiseresort.com
- Address: 125 Ponce Harbor Drive, St. Augustine, FL
- Keep in mind: Locations in Jacksonville and Palm Coast as well.

Restaurants

RecommendeD

★ BISTRO DE LEON

A French menu for breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner – including kids’ options. Chef Jean-Stephane is a fifth generation chef and leaves things simple and excellent. As such, the place is cosy (under a dozen tables) - allowing everything to be made to order. Why not try: the 3-course Early Bird set menu.

- Cuisine: French café
- Website: http://www.bistrodeleon.com
- Address: 12 Cathedral Pl, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: Closed Wednesdays

★ THE TASTING ROOM

Taking home 4 awards in a recent “Best of St. Augustine” survey (including best tapas and best wine list), you can trust your Spanish food in St. Augustine. To keep your focus on your friends, family and conversation, the menu makes it easy and has “Ultimate Lunch or Dinner” options – a chef’s choice of tasting plates to share. Why not try: Goat Cheese Empanadas.

- Cuisine: Tapas
• Website: http://www.tastetapas.com
• Address: 25 Cuna St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Keep in mind: Live music nightly

★ COLUMBIA RESTAURANT

In the thick of St. Augustine’s historic district, the Columbia is very much on the beaten track - but that’s not to its discredit. Part of a Floridian family of Spanish restaurants founded in 1905, the room itself packs the same architectural interest you’ll find outside. Why not try: Paella Campesina.

• Cuisine: Spanish
• Website: http://www.columbiarestaurant.com/st_augustine.asp
• Address: 98 Saint George St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: Kids’ menu available
• Keep in mind: Open 365 days a year, take-out also available

★ COLLAGE

Quick! Think of something special to celebrate! This restaurant sits, deservedly, in the “Hey, Big Spender” category - and you’ll love every minute. Top-notch service, ambiance and excellent food. Save room for: The Bougainvillea Dessert.

• Cuisine: Fine dining
• Website: http://www.collagestaug.com
• Address: 60 Hypolita Street St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Keep in mind: Reservations recommended

★ 95 CORDOVA

To spoil someone you love, head to 95 Cordova. A romantic, elegant spot where you’ll want a reservation to guarantee getting in. Arrive early? Savor a cocktail near the piano after no-stress parking: valet is available! (Not always the case in this pedestrian town). To make an evening of it, stop for a night-cap at the Cobalt Lounge, also on-site. It presents live music every night. Want to bring the whole family? Book for Sunday brunch instead (or as well?). Save room for: Meyer Lemon and Lavender Pot De Crème (menu changes seasonally).

• Cuisine: Fusion
• Website: http://www.casamonica.com/dining/dining.asp
• Address: 1888, 95 Cordova St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Keep in mind: Located in the Casa Monica hotel.

★ THE PRESENT MOMENT CAFÉ

When you’ve had your fill of beach burgers or seafood, the green, healthy stuff is waiting at this ever-so-holistic café. If your body isn’t a temple quite yet, you’ll be glad to stop for breakfast, lunch, dinner or dessert. Save room for: Chocolate Marble Torte with Drunken Banana.

• Cuisine: Organic vegetarian and gluten-free
• Website: http://www.thepresentmomentcafe.com
• Address: U.S. 1 South, 224 W King St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Keep in mind: Take-out available

★ HARRY’S SEAFOOD, BAR & GRILLE

Sitting on the river just besides the Bridge of Lions, Harry’s is a St. Augustine landmark. Seafood is fresh as can be, though the menu offers plenty of choice for all palates. Enjoy the outdoor courtyard flanked with soaring trees. The building dates to the 1740s and retains original coquina walls. When was the last time you ate within such storied walls?

• Cuisine: Louisiana seafood
• Website: Harry’s Seafood Facebook
• Address: 46 Avenida Menendez, St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: Kids’ menu available, Mardi Gras beads for children
• Pets: Welcome in the outdoor courtyard

Where can I buy fresh fish?

Kyle’s Seafood. Head north on U.S. Highway 1 (towards Jacksonville). A great selection of fresh seafood to BBQ (on the beach?), as well as ready-to-go items: battered shrimp, smoked fish, etc. Worth the trip if you love your seafood!

★ THE BLACK MOLLY GRILL

A local’s place serving local food - beat that! Extremely welcoming to families, the tablecloths are paper with a side of Crayola. Don’t let its strip-mall location put you off, this place is independently owned and operated by long-time restauranteurs. The menu
also offers a chance to try out the local specialty – datil peppers. Save room for: Key Lime Pie - from scratch!

• Cuisine: Seafood, steaks, fresh and local
• Website: http://www.blackmollygrill.com
• Address: 504 W Geoffrey Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: Very family-friendly
• Keep in mind: Desserts change daily.

★ CASA MAYA

Organic ingredients take center stage. Maya welcomes you into a Yucatan hearth and home. Try to reserve an outside table if you can – the patio is idyllic. The menu boasts organic ingredients, bought locally and fresh each day. Try the: Hibiscus Sangria or Mayan Cinnamon Hot Chocolate.

• Cuisine: Mayan
• Website: Casa Maya Facebook
• Address: 22 Hypolita Street, St. Augustine 32084
• Keep in mind: This place is tiny!

LUNCH

★ CAFÉ ALCAZAR

Want to eat lunch in the deep end of a swimming pool? (Once the world’s largest indoor pool). This slightly fancy, slightly quirky café serves lunch daily: big, hearty portions of quality food. Sandwiches and desserts are easily shared over the course of a very memorable lunch. Definitely try: Curried Chicken Salad.

• Cuisine: Soups/salads/sandwiches
• Website: http://www.thecafealcazar.com
• Address: 25 Granada St., Suite F, St. Augustine, FL 32084,
• Keep in mind: Inside the Lightener Museum. Lunch only!

★ THE BUNNERY

There comes a time in every vacation when you need a pastry. A good pastry – a Danish made with real butter, or a mid-morning croissant. Stop at The Bunnery to grab

Datil peppers?
A local St. Augustine specialty! (And they’re HOT!) You might see them on the menu, or for sale at a farmers’ market. If you like to garden, take home a datil pepper plant (available at Stewarts Market).
a snack, a quick lunch or a rev-your-engines weekend breakfast, before heading off for more exploring. Why not try: A PB&J where both bread and jam are home-made.

- Cuisine: Breakfast/sandwiches/salads
- Website: http://www.bunnerybakeryandcafe.com
- Address: 121 St. George's Street, Saint Augustine, FL 32084

★ THE BACK 40 URBAN CAFE

Quite the hole-in-the-wall but you’ll be glad you found it. Fresh food with lots of veggie/vegan options and a long list of wine and micro-brews. Why not try: Upside Down Chicken Pot-Pie.

- Cuisine: Salads and sandwiches
- Website: http://back40urbancafe.com
- Address: U.S. 1 South, 40 South Dixie Highway, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: closed Sundays

★ MANATEE CAFE

- Cuisine: Vegetarian breakfast and lunch
- Website: http://www.manateecafe.com
- Address: 525 Florida 16 #106 St. Augustine, FL 32084

★ GAS FULL SERVICE RESTAURANT

- Cuisine: Burgers and home-made favorites
- Website: Gas Full Service Facebook
- Address: 9 Anastasia Blvd. #C, Saint Augustine, FL.
- Keep in mind: Desserts change daily – check Facebook

COFFEE, SNACKS AND ICE CREAM

★ THE HYPPO

Lips stained popsicle-pink can be a summertime hazard, but not at The Hyppo. This gourmet popsicle shop makes everything fresh and completely naturally. Ingredients are mostly local and the flavors require serious contemplation. You’ll never be satisfied with plain strawberry again. If you find yourself hooked, they ship nationwide. Save room for: Datil Strawberry or Pineapple Cilantro
Cuisine: Gourmet popsicles
Website: http://thehyppo.com
Address: 48 Charlotte St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
Children: Yes, yes, and yes

★ CAFÉ DEL HIDALGO

Any gelato expert will proudly tell you how much fresher and healthier gelato is than ice cream. At Café del Hidalgo it’s made fresh every day – will you gladly help devour their stock and return for more tomorrow? Save room for: ‘Copa to Share’ tasting platter.

Cuisine: Gelato
Address: 35 Hypolita St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
Children: Absolutely

★ LULI’S CUPCAKES

Cuisine: Cupcakes, birthday cakes and home-made ice cream
Website: http://www.luliscupcakes.com
Address: 82 San Marco Avenue St. Augustine, FL 32084

★ CRUCIAL COFFEE CAFE

Cuisine: Coffee, tea and desserts
Website: Crucial Coffee Cafe Facebook
Address: 26 Charlotte Street, Saint Augustine, FL.

COCKTAILS AND NIGHTLIFE

★ THE CONCH HOUSE

Perhaps eat elsewhere – but do so by sunset. This place is on the water and has the ice on hand for your favorite cocktail, as soon as the sky turns pink. Happy hours are long and generous – voted best in the city in a local paper. Why not try: Bahamian Conch Fritters.

Cuisine: Cocktails
Website: http://www.conch-house.com
Address: 57 Comares Ave. St. Augustine, FL 32080
Keep in mind: Live reggae music on Sundays
**SANGRIAS WINE & PIANO BAR**

The Spanish left quite a legacy – that of sangria on a balmy night. Enjoy a pitcher while people-watching from your balcony perch – time it right (or check their online calendar) and there might be live music too. Why not try: Sweet Potato Black Bean Burritos.

- Cuisine: Tapas and wine
- Address: 35 Hypolita Street St. Augustine, FL 32084

**FOR BEER AND CIGARS**

**A1A ALE WORKS**

Beer and a great view – are all your needs met? This casual spot beckons with a big patio upstairs, solving any problems you have with spare time on a sunny afternoon. Try a new beer brewed in-house, or choose from a decent selection of imported beer. Hungry? Standard pub fare is also available. Save room for: Fried Custard.

- Cuisine: Handcrafted Beer
- Website: http://www.a1aaleworks.com
- Address: 1 King Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Keep in mind: You can try all 6 house beers in a sample session

**J.P. HENLEY’S**

Bay-front views and televised sports make a bar that everyone can agree on. Fifty draft beers offer a selection not to be rivaled (add a sausage sampler) or, if you’re more of a wine fan, try a glass with a cheese plate. Why not try: Lazy Magnolia Southern Pecan Ale.

- Cuisine: Beers & wines of the world
- Website: http://www.jphenleys.com
- Address: 10 Marine St., St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Kids’ menu available

**STOGIES JAZZ CLUB & LISTENING ROOM**

Cigar connoisseurs will find Stogies a welcome respite from Florida’s heat, however non-smokers should check out the craft beer selection. Enjoy one or both in their
outdoor courtyard, where live music might be blues or jazz. Save time for: a board game played upstairs.

- Cuisine: Beer, wine, cigars
- Address: 36 Charlotte St., Saint Augustine, FL 32084
- Pets: Welcome in the outdoor courtyard

Things to do at night

Live music

Through the summer, both visitors and locals enjoy two free concerts, one on Wednesday and one on Thursday, every week. In addition to an annual classical music festival, there’s a great deal of live music going on, all around town. For a great up-to-date listing of what’s on, see Old City music news.

★ MUSIC BY THE SEA (WEDNESDAY)

Bring your beach chairs to enjoy a range of music, something different every week. Annual anniversary shows bring the big names – most recently former members of The Hollies, The Moody Blues, and Wings.

- Website: http://thecivicassociation.com
- Address: St. Augustine Beach
- Children: Family-friendly
- Keep in mind: From May through September

★ CONCERTS IN THE PLAZA (THURSDAY)

Gather your picnic around a gazebo, for another summer evening of free music. Is St. Augustine good to you or what? Check the website for the schedule, it might be anything from bluegrass to pop-rock.

- Website: Concerts in the Plaza online
- Address: Cathedral Place and King Street, to the west of the Bridge of Lions
• Keep in mind: Memorial Day through Labor Day

★ ST. AUGUSTINE MUSIC FESTIVAL (ANNUAL)

Two musicians in the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra founded this free summer festival in 2007, and it’s now a much-anticipated feature of St. Augustine’s events calendar

• Website: http://staugustinemusicfestival.org
• Date: Consecutive weekends in June
• Keep in mind: Did we mention it’s free?

★ RHYTHM AND RIBS FESTIVAL (ANNUAL)

Barbeque. Live music. (And - if applicable - your children, happy and smiling). This annual, 3-day event is for charity and last year welcomed 20,000 visitors.

• Website: http://www.rhythmandribs.net
• Date: Early April

Ghost tours

Here’s the thing about ghost tours. They’re like bachelor parties. Half the group will have a great time, the other half will wish they’d stayed home. Maybe you believe in ghosts, or maybe you’re just along for the ride – either way, St. Augustine’s stories leave room for dozens of ghostly offerings in the tourist spectrum. Once the sun’s gone down, it’s basically ghost-everything: haunted horse rides, haunted lighthouses, haunted jails. Care to join in? Here are a handful of the more creative options – by no means an exhaustive list.

• Winter warning: Dress warmly if heading out for nighttime haunting. Many tours last two hours or more, plenty long enough to wish you’d brought a scarf.

• Enjoying your tour: If you’ve spent the day sight-seeing, you might be asking a lot of your legs to walk a few more hours after dark. If you have the flexibility, schedule your ghostly evening after an easy day of beach bummying.

• With kids: Some tours aim to be scarier than others and aren’t suitable for youngsters. Elsewhere in the world we’ve heard of a children’s birthday party at a “friendly” ghost
tour – where every child went home early in tears. Ask the tour operator about its appropriateness, or check others parents’ reviews on TripAdvisor or similar sites.

★ HAUNTED PUB TOUR (GHOST AUGUSTINE)

Gather your geeks! This one includes ghost gadgets and beer. Variations on the nighttime pub tour theme include the company’s other offerings: their Haunted Hearse Tour, Total Paranormal St. Augustine Tour or – for the weirdest designated-driver ever – the Pub Hearse Ride. Scary or silly, it’ll be a more memorable night than hotel room HBO.

- Website: http://www.ghostaugustine.com/haunted-pub-tour.php
- Address: Departs from 162 St. George Street, suite 19 (inside Heritage Walk mall)
- Children: "Midnight" Hearse Ride Tour allows teens, otherwise must be 21.
- Pets: Pets are allowed with prior permission on private hearse tours.
- Keep in mind: Discounts for online booking.

★ GHOST TOURS OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Did you know it’s possible to be a professionally licensed ghost tour guide? These guys have got it. Choose to ride, walk or investigate in their capable leadership – whether on the Ghostly Experience walking tour, Ghost and Gravestones riding tour, or the Potters House of Wax paranormal investigation.

- Website: http://www.ghosttoursofstaugustine.com
- Address: 2 St. George Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Children ages six and up can ride the ‘Trolley of the Doomed’
- Keep in mind: Check website for coupons

St. Augustine at Christmas

St. Augustine is a great spot in the winter months, whether you’re a snowbird (or a spring chicken). Here are seven reasons to visit around the holidays.

★ ST. AUGUSTINE CHRISTMAS PARADE

Starting at 10 a.m. from the Mission of Nombre de Dios, this large, loud and festive parade weaves through historic St. Augustine for over an hour. Get photos with Santa afterwards in the Plaza de la Constitucion.
• Address: ends at Plaza de la Constitucion, St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Keep in mind: Typically the first Saturday in December.

★ WINTER WONDERLAND

The St. Augustine Amphitheater puts on its snowsuit each year, complete with an Elf Village for little kids and a Blizzard Bounce for slightly older ones. Amidst snow machines, adults and kids alike will enjoy hot cocoa, an outdoor ice rink, plus sleigh rides and photos with Santa. A weekday or weeknight visit will be a much quieter experience than Friday or Saturday night.

• Website: http://www.winterwonderlandflorida.com
• Address: 1340C A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Children: Family-friendly, though some rides have height restrictions
• Keep in mind: Free admission with individually ticketed rides

★ Holiday tours

★ HOLIDAY TOUR OF BED & BREAKFAST INNS

A tour that comes with treats! Over twenty of St. Augustine’s decorated historic inns open their doors to visitors across a holiday weekend. Each one offers seasonal samples from a local restaurant, bakery or chocolatier, should you need added incentive. A once-a-year chance to see the city’s best in sparkling holiday light.

• Website: http://staugustinebandbtour.com
• Keep in mind: Proceeds go to St. Augustine’s “Empty Stocking Fund”.

★ CANDLELIGHT TOURS AT VILLA ZORAYDA

Arrive early for some holiday refreshments, then tour this 1880s mock Moorish castle by candlelight. Book this as a fantastic surprise for anyone in your group who loves history, art or a little holiday romance.

• Website: http://www.villazorayda.com/candlelighttours.html
• Address: 83 King Street, St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: Ages 3 and up are very welcome, with children 4-7 admitted free.
• Keep in mind: Reservations are recommended due to popularity/limited space.

Nights of Lights

National Geographic knows outdoor beauty – and rightly named St. Augustine’s Night of Lights amongst the top ten places to see holiday lights worldwide. ‘Over two months of lights’ would be a more appropriate but not-so-rhyming name, as the spectacle runs from mid-November to late January each year. As if this magical city needed extra gloss, you can’t believe the fanciful transformation made from a few million Christmas lights strung across town.

Enterprising businesses offer ways and means of amplifying your experience – whether involving a trolley, a horse or some carols.

★ NIGHTS OF LIGHTS CARRIAGE TOUR

• Website: http://www.thetastingtours.com/night-of-lights-carriage-tour.html
• Keep in mind: This tour comes with wine! Reservations required.

★ HOLLY JOLLY TROLLEY – OR – SANTA’S BIG RED CHRISTMAS TRAIN

Both trolley/train tour companies offer a Night of Lights experience with carol-singing, refreshments and a good atmosphere for all ages. See page 16 to determine whether you’re a trolley or a train person.

• Trolleys: Holly Jolly Website
• Trains: Christmas Train Website
• Children: Family-friendly
St. Augustine area beaches

The beaches (north to south)

- **Vilano Beach:** Separated from the rest by the inlet, this beach is a great skim-boarding destination as its shore is very steep.

- **Anastasia State Recreation Area:** The only beach where cars are banned. Also the only beach where pets are banned. You win some, you lose some!

- **St. Augustine Beach:** Very popular and quite commercial, you’re in the middle of The Action. The beach is very rocky near the pier and swimming is not recommended due to strong waves. Good for surfing though!

- **Crescent Beach:** A great family beach with nice, soft sand.

- **Summerhaven Beach:** At the far south of Anastasia Island, this is a “little-known secret” of a beach, and also the widest on this stretch of coast.

Beach basics

**PARKING, CARS AND ACCESS POINTS**

- **Free parking:** at St. Augustine Beach and Crescent Beach – but you’ll need to arrive early to get a spot, especially in the summer.

- **Avoiding cars on the beach:** Head to Anastasia State Park (see page 58), or find a beach with particularly soft sand (such as Summerhaven towards the south of the island).

- **Or – How to drive on the beach:** to do so from March 1st through Labor Day
you’ll need a pass. Day passes are available, or choose a season pass if staying for more than a week (more details online). Take note of the sand conditions, you’d lose all cool points if your car gets stuck.

- **Wheelchair access:** Handicapped Beach Wheelchairs. These babies roll easily across the sand, and are available for free rental (including delivery!) courtesy of St. Johns County. To arrange, call St. Johns County Beach Services Department at (904) 209-0752. First come, first serve.

### Vilano Beach

Vilano, ‘villain’ in Spanish, may once have been an area known for pirates, marauders and ship-wreckers. So goes the rumor of its name. Its reputation changed towards the end of the 19th Century, when area tycoon Henry Flagler started inviting his rich and famous friends here for beach R&R while staying at his two hotels.

Today Vilano remains a local’s secret, particularly popular with surfers and skim-boarders – or just about anyone wanting to combine a little athleticism with time on the water. With the Atlantic on one side and the Tolomato River opposite, you’re well-placed for boats, birds and all the beach you want.

### Historic highlights

- **1920s** - The area thrives during an era known as the Florida Land Boom.
• **1926** - The Grand Vilano Casino opens, drawing big-name bands and hosting extravagant parties of the Roaring Twenties. Vilano Beach is the place to be on this coast.

• **1928** - Coastal Highway A1A is built, allowing people to drive to Vilano.

• **1937** - Hurricane winds irreparably damage the casino.

• **1946** - As tourism resumes post-war and car travel gains popularity, the ‘motor court’ motel industry rolls into Vilano and development begins in earnest.

• **2012** - The brand new Publix Grocery Store and Vilano Town Center open with new eateries.

• **2012** - A new floating, public dock opens making Vilano accessible to yachts and boats. (See page 54 for details and to try it yourself).

### Beach basics

#### ATMOSPHERE

Vilano Beach is popular with those looking for a quiet beach with few interruptions from spotting wildlife or looking for sharks’ teeth. Its popularity as a surfing destination will suggest that the waves can be rough for swimming, though by no means an absolute. With the opening of the brand new Publix in May 2012, Vilano may be the perfect location.

#### SAND

The beach is coquina (crushed shell), so shoes are recommended when going for a walk. You’ll have great luck looking for sharks’ teeth and shells. Yet more good news: sand castles build themselves on a coquina beach.

#### CARS ON THE BEACH

You can have it both ways on Vilano. Cars and car parking are only allowed on the southern end of Vilano. The rest of Vilano is car-free.
Vilano highlights

SUNSET AND SPORTY HIGHLIGHTS ON THE VILANO CALENDAR

★ SUNSET CELEBRATION AT VILANO BEACH PIER
Live music and a farmers’ market-style array of arts and crafts, set to a Vilano Beach sunset. The first Saturday of every month, from 3 p.m. through dusk.

• Website: Sunset Celebration online

★ ANNUAL VILANO BRIDGE 5K RUN AND WALK
• What: Run or walk over the Intracoastal. Breakfast prior and a race T-shirt.
• Date: Early June
• Website: http://www.vilanobeachfl.com

★ ANNUAL FLORIDA SKIM-BOARDING PRO AM CHAMPIONSHIP
• What: Skim-boarders compete to become world champions
• Date: Late August
• Website: http://www.rundropslide.com

Things to do

★ SEASIDE HORSEBACK RIDING
Saddle up and head down the shore. By reservation, enjoy an hour’s horse ride along Vilano Beach – whether with your spouse or partner, or in a group. A sedate but beautiful way to enjoy the beach – wind in your hair and all.

• Website: http://countrycarriages.net
• Address: 6 Surfside Ave, St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Keep in mind: Walking only (no galloping), and wear closed-toed shoes.

★ SHARK TEETH HUNTING - WALKING TOUR
A novel way to enjoy the beach together. Learn the pre-history of the St. Augustine area, as you hone your eagle-eye and discover fossilized sharks’ teeth, as well as sea glass and all manner of shells. The tour includes a bag to keep your treasures, as well as bottled water.

• Website: http://www.staugustinesharkteethtours.com
• Phone: (904) 540-5350
• Children: Free for kids under six
• Keep in mind: Summer season only. Reservations required.

★ VILANO BEACH FISHING PIER
Free fishing access and all the pelicans you could want.

• Website: http://www.vilanobeachfl.com
• Address: 250 Vilano Rd, St. Augustine , FL 32084
• Keep in mind: Publix supermarket is close if you’d like to picnic.

★ VILANO’S FLOATING BOAT DOCK
Brand new in 2012, the dock floats just besides Vilano Beach Pier and allows boaters free docking for four hours. Plenty of time to grab a beer and something to eat, as well as stock up on groceries at the nearby Publix.

★ SURFSIDE PARK
Many charters (boats, jet-skis, fishing, etc) operate from here – else you can stay on dry land and enjoy the public beach access with picnic areas and outdoor showers.

• Website: Surfside Park online
• Address: 3070 Coastal Highway
JET-SKIS ON VILANO INTRACOASTAL

Rules and regs
Born on or after January 1, 1988? Before you hope on a jet-ski in Florida, you’ll need to spend a half hour taking a Safe Boater test. Jet-ski rental providers will offer this on-site or you can take it online now and not lose a minute of vacation time.

Jet-ski areas
If renting a jet-ski, your provider will let you know the legal areas for their use on the water. Basically it’s a three-mile stretch from Vilano Bridge up the intracoastal.

★ BAY BOAT RENTALS
Offers new Kawasaki model jet-skis that accommodate up to three people. Life jackets are provided and rental periods range from 30 minutes to four hours.

- Website: http://www.bayrayrentals.com/jet-ski
- Address: 240 Vilano Road, St. Augustine FL, 32080

Restaurants

★ CAP’S ON THE WATER
A perfect location with a sunset oyster bar, Cap’s serves up “new coastal cuisine in an old Florida setting”. Popular with both locals and tourists for unparalleled views and an unbeatable wine list. Save room for: Dulce De Leche Chocolate Cake.

- Cuisine: Seafood
- Website: http://www.capsonthewater.com
- Address: 4325 Myrtle St., Saint Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Kid’s Menu and a tire swing!
- Keep in mind: Lunch on Fridays/weekends, dinner daily. “First come, first serve” policy.
★ THE REEF RESTAURANT

For great ocean views in a more upscale environment, the Reef’s main dining area is indoors, so you’ll stay cool in the summer and comfortable in the winter. The dress code isn’t T-shirts, so pack something dressier for a Sunday brunch. Save room for: Florida Orange Sunshine Cheesecake

- Cuisine: Seafood
- Website: http://www.thereefstaugustine.com
- Address: 4100 Coastal Highway, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Yes, child-friendly
- Pets: Pet-friendly deck
- Keep in mind: Happy hour and Sunday brunch also available.

★ AUNT KATE’S ON THE RIVER

This gem is riverside and with calmer waters come the chance to see birds fishing on the banks and manatees swimming slowly by. If you head inside, the large main dining room or the Victory Bar both offer a relaxed ambiance. Giving points for effort, while the menu won’t change your life, the BBQ is smoked in-house. Why not try: Baby Back Ribs.

- Cuisine: Florida camp cooking
- Website: http://aunt-kates.com
- Address: 612 Euclid Ave., St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: Lunch and dinner only – early bird specials

★ TROPICANA CUBAN

A third-generation Cuban restauranteur, Armando and his wife Ana offer a new menu for 2012 with tantalizing mention of “secret sauce” (bottled and sold if you’d like to take some home). Eat in or take out, and maybe pick a home-made pizza to devour later. Save room for: Cuban Rum Cake.

- Cuisine: Cuban
- Website: http://www.tropicanacuban.com
- Address: 165 Vilano Road St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Keep in mind: Dinner only Mon-Thurs. Lunch and dinner Friday and Saturday. Closed Sunday.
★ BEACHES AT VILANO

Just off Vilano Beach Pier, this is a great stop for sunset – whether you’ve timed your dinner right or just want an end-of-day drink and snack. The fun never ends with an outdoor tiki bar, long happy hour and even imported white sand near the water to create a tropical atmosphere. Save room for: Homemade Apple Cobbler.

- Cuisine: Seafood, salads, sandwiches
- Website: http://www.beachesatvilano.com
- Address: 254 Vilano Rd, Vilano Beach, FL 32084
- Children: Kids’ menu available. They can play on the beach while you relax.
- Keep in mind: Lunch, dinner and live music

See also - Publix Supermarket
55 Ava Way, St. Augustine, FL
For pets

★ VILANO MOBILE VET

- Website: http://www.vilanomobilevet.com
- Phone: (904) 315-1331
- Keep in mind: House-call veterinary service

Anastasia State Park

A beloved Florida park for good reason – there are 1,600 acres of pristine natural beauty with days’ worth of family-friendly activity on offer: beach, hiking trails, salt marshes and water-sports galore.

- Website: Anastasia State Park online
- Address: 1340 A1A South
- Pets: Allowed on-leash throughout the park but not on the beach.

BEACH

Sophie’s Choice! You’ll love this natural beach for its lack of cars – total serenity. However, you can’t bring your dog on the beach. While you pay a day-rate for access, the sand here is as soft as can be. Plus, the further you walk from the parking lot, the more you’ll have the beach to yourself. When you tire of sun-bathing and sand castles there’s a rental shop, Anastasia Watersports, with bikes and kayaks and all kinds of boards.
WATERSPORTS AND THE OUTDOORS

Anastasia State Park is extremely on-the-ball when it comes to helping you best plan and enjoy your visit. Their website offers great details about upcoming events and ranger programs, such as photography contests and birding lectures.

- Anastasia State Park events
- Anastasia State Park ranger programs

St. Augustine Beach and Pier

GET YOUR BEARINGS

From St. Augustine’s old town, head across the Bridge of Lions and reach Anastasia Island. Running roughly north-south for 11 miles, St. Augustine Beach sits just below Anastasia State Park. A community with ‘beach’ permanently on its mind, you’ll find everything vacation-related at your fingertips. Using the fishing pier as ‘Mile 0’, there’s a kids’ splash park and beach volleyball, then miles of beach access, surf shops, beach cafés and so on.

To get the lie of the land, there’s no better first step on St. Augustine Beach than to see the whole thing from above. Speaking of steps –

★ ST. AUGUSTINE LIGHTHOUSE

You always take the stairs instead of the elevator, right? Put that athletic prowess on display as you climb 214 steps up this black and white stripey lighthouse, to earn the best view in the county. (The breeze will be welcome, too). Don’t dismiss this landmark as “just a lighthouse”, it offers fascinating history and special interest events. ‘The Lost
Ships’ provides archaeological insight to the shipwrecks of yore, while the ‘Dark of the Moon Tour’ is a spooky after-hours ghost event. The latter is extremely popular (if crowds put you off, note that there is a private tour option). Early riser? Consider watching the sunrise from the lighthouse top deck – then beating the entire beach to breakfast.

- Website: [http://www.staugustinelighthouse.org](http://www.staugustinelighthouse.org)
- Address: 81 Lighthouse Ave, St. Augustine, FL 32080
- Children: Strict rule! You child must be taller than 44 inches. There’s a free children’s museum, Eliza’s and Cracker’s Club, for little kids too short to climb.
- Keep in mind: Military discounts available. Check the website for general admission coupons.

★ ST. AUGUSTINE PIER

The center of the community, the pier is part of a larger 4-acre park that hosts free summer concerts and weekly farmers’ markets (see pages 45 and 29), and has a great splash park for kids (see page 35). If you’ve got fishing on your mind, you can rent all your equipment and buy bait on site, then pay a small fee for a daily pass.

- Website: [St. Augustine Pier online](http://www.staugustinelighthouse.org)
- Address: 350 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine Beach, FL
- Children: Pier access free for kids under 6
- Keep in mind: Swimming near the pier is prohibited – leaving all the water for happy surfers. See page 70 for surfing detail including rentals and lessons.

BEACH

While St. Augustine Beach is busier than Vilano, cars on the beach are by no means an overwhelming feature. Many will park and use the car as a convenient cooler and changing room, rather than driving in a procession as in Daytona. There is a designated car-free section of the beach, if you prefer.
St. Augustine Beach Restaurants

★ MANGO MANGO’S CARIBBEAN GRILL & BAR

A vacation staple – the place where you don’t have to think about the menu, and instead can enjoy an ocean view while someone nice puts an umbrella drink in your hand. A friendly, family-run affair with colorful décor. Save room for: Mango’s Monster Pie.

• Cuisine: Caribbean
• Website: http://mangomangos.com
• Address: 700 A1A Beach Blvd., Saint Augustine, FL 32080
• Children: Kids’ menu available
• Keep in mind: Daily happy hour

For all other St. Augustine area restaurants see pages 38 to 45.

For pets

★ ANASTASIA VETERINARY PRACTICE

• Phone: (904) 471-0810
• Address: 15 1st Street, St. Augustine, FL

★ ANIMAL HOME HEALTH

• Phone: (904) 794-9492
• Address: State Road 206 E St. Augustine, FL
Crescent Beach

BEACH BASICS

To clear the confusion straight away – Florida has two Crescent Beaches. Ours is a sugary white gem south of St. Augustine Beach. The other is on the Gulf Coast, near Siesta Key. You’ll only need one in your life – and here’s why you should choose ours.

• Great for boogie boarding.
• A good atmosphere with the right amount of tourist infrastructure, great for families.
• A gentle slope makes it better for swimming than steeper beaches to the north.
• White sand is soft on your feet, and stays cooler as well.

What to see (Sights)

★ FORT MATANZAS NATIONAL MONUMENT

Take a short (and free) ferry ride to this small Spanish fort from 1740. Little kids will love it because there’s a boat ride involved, and a great ‘Junior Ranger Program’ keeps their interest on arrival. (Ask for a booklet at the info kiosk at the entrance). Even adults will be surprised how much history a little island can hold. Really worth the trip, especially on a sunny day, but don’t forget to bring water.

• Website: Fort Matanzas online
• Address: 8635 A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Children: Free admission for kids under 14.
• Pets: Allowed on-leash in the park, its beach and trails. Animals are prohibited on the boat or at the fort, so plan ahead who will stay behind.
• Keep in mind: The ferry runs every hour at half past, watch for dolphins on the way.
GENERAL RECREATION & SPORTS

★ FAVER-DYKES STATE PARK

If you have a paddling enthusiast in your group, a bird-watcher, or anyone even half interested in local fauna, Faver-Dykes makes a great destination for a few hours to an entire afternoon. Set kids the challenge of spotting a marsh rabbit – they can swim! With one-in-a-million luck you’ll see a gray fox or a bobcat, and are much more likely to see deer or otters. Marked nature trails show the way. On the water, Pellicer Creek’s paddling trail is four miles going one way, though you can make it a loop if the current is slow.

• Website: http://www.floridastateparks.org/faverdykes
• Address: 1000 Faver-Dykes Road, St. Augustine, FL 32086
• Pets: Allowed on-leash in designated areas.
• Keep in mind: Canoes can be rented at the park’s boat launch.

Restaurants

★ SOUTH BEACH GRILL

Fresh, local seafood with an emphasis on keeping things beachy cool and casual. A gluten-free menu is available as well. Why not try: the Steamed Seafood Platter.

• Cuisine: Seafood
★ **STEPHEN’S SOUL FOOD**

Biscuits, sausage, gravy – so good you might need a little cry. Yes, everything’s home-made. Save room for: Cinnamon Pecan Sticky Buns.

- Cuisine: Breakfast and Southern-style lunches
- Website: http://stephensfinefoods.blogspot.ca
- Address: 6101 A1A South in St. Augustine, FL (Treasure Beach Plaza)
- Keep in mind: Grab some home-made jams and jellies for the ultimate foodie souvenir.

★ **CASA BENEDETTO’S ITALIAN CAFE**

As a family, the Benedettos have run home-style Italian restaurants for over a hundred years. Today, the tradition continues in a pink A-frame house with ‘quaint’ written all over it. Trendy it’s not – but they don’t call it grandma’s cooking for nothing.

Save room for: Home-made Tiramisu.

- Cuisine: Italian (Sicilian)
- Website: http://www.casabenedettos.com
- Address: 6357 A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
- Keep in mind: Dinner only, closed Sundays.

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**Summerhaven Beach**

As far as local secrets, Summerhaven Beach might be the softest and most sugary. It’s as far south as you can go on Anastasia Island, right before you hit Matanzas Inlet. While many will pass by en route elsewhere, your best bet is to hit the brakes and spend some time on a beach known for its white sand and ideal boogie boarding.
St. Augustine area outdoors

Eco tours

★ RIPLEY EFFECT ECOTOURS

Once sitting comfortably in a kayak, you’ve got more options with Ripple Effect than you’d have at an NYC deli. First, choose from one of six locations near St. Augustine. Then, consider the range of tailored tours available at each site. At Guana-Tolomato Matanzas (see page 135), a partial look at the catalogue includes a full moon tour, astronomy tour, sunset tour or a family tour. But how about kayak fly-fishing or private lessons? All are available from guides with Florida Master Naturalists certification. They’re pretty good at paddling, too. To choose the tour for you, check out the web calendar & make your booking. Beginners very welcome.

• Website: http://www.rippleeffectecotours.com
• Address: 101 Tolstoy Lane, St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Children: Ages 6 and up (daytime), 12 and up (sunset tours)
• Keep in mind: Reservations can be made online

★ ST. AUGUSTINE ECO TOURS

Yet more choices! These eco-tour offerings can be made by boat, kayak or catamaran, as well as on foot. View their web calendar to see their full range of tours, though favorites include photography tours and heading into the back-country with your certified naturalist guide. The company is happy to discuss its environmentally ethical approach (check website for more details), and its small size allows it be extremely accommodating to your needs.

• Website: http://www.staugustineecotours.com
• Address: 1093 A1A Beach Blvd., #430, St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Children: all ages accommodated, newborns and up
• Pets: pet-friendly
• Keep in mind: disabilities accommodated, call for details
Watersports

Canoeing and kayaking

(For eco-tours by kayak, please see the previous section). Know what you’re doing and just want the equipment? See page 73 for rental info. Any sort of paddling is hugely popular in these parts – we certainly have water to spare.

What’s the difference between a canoe and a kayak? Canoes tend to be wider, and you can move around in them. You’ll maneuver with a one-sided paddle. Kayaks keep you seated – at waist-level with the water – and you’ll use a double-sided paddle. Both allow you to enjoy parts of Florida you’d never see from a road, sidewalk or trail.

★ KAYAKING ST. AUGUSTINE

Beginners tours and instruction available, departing from the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Anastasia State Park.

- Website: http://kayakingstaugustine.com
- Keep in mind: Group and private tour options

★ ST. AUGUSTINE KAYAK COMPANY

A very flexible operation offering all manner of guided trips by customer request. Ideal if you’ve only got limited windows of availability and want to make the most of it. ‘Paddle and dine’ options stand out – park and meet your guide at a waterfront restaurant, then work up an appetite on kayak tour, before returning for your well-earned dinner and beer.

- Website: http://www.canoeflorida.com
- Keep in mind: Kayak and canoe rental also available, with delivery
Stand-up paddling (SUP)

With so much water on offer, especially in the protected inland waters, stand-up paddling is the water-sport of the moment. Why? A few reasons. It’s easy to get the hang of, so you can be up and away much more quickly than with a sport like surfing or sailing. When visiting somewhere as beautiful as our Florida coast, it’s a work-out and sight-seeing all at once.

★ LETS GO STAND UP

Private SUP Lessons, SUP surfing, Group Cruising Tour and SUP Fitness.

• Website: http://letsgostandup.com
• Children: Ages 7 and up
• Keep in mind: No prior experience needed.

★ FIRST COAST SUP

SUP yoga and fitness, tours, and lessons for beginners and up. See web calendar for online booking.

• Website: http://www.firstcoastsup.com
• Keep in mind: Departing from 4 locations in and around St. Augustine. The only skill required is that you can swim.

Fishing charters

With both salt and fresh water, there’s a very long list of fish native to the region – including sport fish and very, very tasty fish. Throughout this guide book we mention fishing piers found in area town centers and state parks. However, if you’d like to make a day of it, these local fishing operators might make an extraordinary day of a favorite hobby.
★ **RODBENDER FISHING CHARTERS**

Captain Chuck Stearns has 27 years’ experience fishing St. Augustine’s waters and offers 3-hour to full-day charters to fish snapper, grouper, amberjack, kingfish, tuna, sailfish, barracuda, cobia and more. Except your own drinks and snacks, everything’s provided and done for you, even cleaning the fish!

- Website: http://rodbenderfishingcharters-staugustine.com
- Keep in mind: Requires one week’s notice, minimum.

★ **DRUMMAN CHARTERS**

Want a big fish? Spend as few as four hours or an entire day with Captain James Dumas, fishing St. Augustine’s waters for redfish, black drum, sea trout, flounder, sheepshead, tarpon – and other native species you may or may not have heard of. Everything is provided, even the ice water.

- Website: http://www.drummancharters.com

★ **ENDLESS SUMMER CHARTERS (DEEP SEA)**

Tuna, barracuda, sailfish and marlin – you’re headed out to sea in search of the big boys. Larger groups can be accommodated (up to 12 people) on a choice of three boats.

- Website: http://www.endlesssummercharters.com
- Address: 57 Comares Ave. St. Augustine, Fl 32084

★ **SEA LOVE CHARTERS (DEEP SEA)**

If ‘reel therapy’ isn’t the best name for a fishing boat, we’d love to hear why. Sea Love is a great option if you’re in town with a big group as their biggest of three boats can accommodate up to 61 passengers. Lots of regularly scheduled fishing trips for smaller groups or individuals, too.

- Website: http://www.sealovefishing.com
- Address: 220 Nix Boat Yard Road, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Kids welcome (though they caution about rough seas)
- Keep in mind: Discounts for seniors and children
★ ACTION KAYAK ADVENTURES (KAYAK FLY-FISHING)

Kayak fishing in the expert hands of a native Floridian paddler and fisherman. Combine your trip with hike, or take just a half-day’s fishing excursion.

- Website: http://www.actionkayakadventures.com
- Keep in mind: Military discount available

★ CRAB TOURS

Join experienced crabbers Mike and Nancy Ranquette for a day’s stone crab fishing – whether you want to help cut the bait and pull the pots, or simply take pictures and enjoy the ride.

- Email: summerhouse@centurytel.net
- Phone: 904-794-4476.
- Children: Children welcome
- Keep in mind: Four people maximum, departs from the St. Augustine Municipal Marina (111 Avenida Menendez).

Sailing and boat charters

★ SAILTIME ST. AUGUSTINE

Charters, sunset cruises and sailing lessons, and a very tempting chartered catamaran sail option.

- Website: http://www.sta-sail.com
- Address: 3076 Harbor Drive, St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Very welcome
- Keep in mind: All crew and instructors are licensed and certified

★ YACHT OF FUN

Don’t over-think this: the boat’s motto is “simply - a lot of fun!” Whether that means dancing to Little Big Town’s Pontoon with a beer, or fishing, swimming and touring St. Augustine with your local captain, you’re certain to enjoy yourself as you’ve planned it. The Yacht of Fun is a chartered party boat for up to 6 - dream up whatever you want
to do on the boat, and where you want it to go. Day rates are for the entire day - dawn to dusk, as much fun as you can handle? Even the most cynical landlubbers will crack a smile at Captain Mike’s vibrant vessel.

- Website: http://www.yachtloffun.net
- Address: 1990 Sheridan Dr., St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: Kids welcome
- Keep in mind: Bills itself as the area’s most affordable charter.

★ SURF STATION

Whatever you want to do on a board, no matter what you’ve done before, these guys have an instructive solution. Private lessons and surf camps (including those for girls only and moms only).

- Website: http://www.surf-station.com
- Address: 1020 Anastasia Blvd., St. Augustine, FL 32080 and 6880 A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080 (Crescent Beach)
- Children: Kids welcome. If coming with tween or teenage girls, don’t miss their adjacent shop ‘The Girl Next Door Surf Shop’ – entirely girl-run.

★ ST. AUGUSTINE SURF SCHOOL

A smaller operation that’s very kid-friendly, offering private lessons and surf camps (including girls-only options). Camps run Monday-Thursdays through the summer on both St. Augustine Beach and Vilano Beach.

- Website: http://staugustinesurf.com
- Children: Kids welcome.
Where can I SCUBA dive? Sorry - no such luck! The Atlantic Coast experiences weather that makes it unsuitable for SCUBA diving. Keep your head above water and try something that makes great use of the wind instead – like kite boarding!

★ KITE-BOARDING (OCEAN EXTREME SPORTS)

On the other end of the skill spectrum from a casual boogie boarding session, kite-boarding will take practice, skill, precision and a fair amount of guts. We can’t vouch for it personally, but we’d imagine thrill-seekers will find the hard work worth it.

- Website: http://www.oceanextremesports.com/kitesurf-lessons.html
- Address: 3930 A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080

★ SMILE HIGH PARASAIL

When you’re feeling hot and humid at sea level, take to the skies and make your own breeze. You might even spot a shark out in the sea. The sail is a bright yellow happy face – quite apropos, we think. Prices vary depending how high you wish to go. If the bragging rights of hitting 1400 feet aren’t enough, you get an ugly T-shirt to commemorate the flight. Locals suggest sending a non-participating friend or family member out to A1A Beach Road and Pope Road with a big lens, they’ll get some great shots of you sailing high. This would be a cheaper, higher quality option than the pricey ‘commemorative CD’ offered by the operator.

- Website: www.smilehighparasail.com
- Address: 111 Avenida Menendez, St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: The website says even a one-year-old can parasail. Seriously?
• Keep in mind: Up to 3 people at a time

General recreation

Vacation allows you to spend more time on a favorite hobby, or pick up a new one. Both that follow are all about hot weather and not only get you relaxed but earn you more ice cream.

★ BIKRAM YOGA ST. AUGUSTINE

You’ll either love the heat or run a mile, but bikram devotees can’t get enough. This studio offers specials for out-of-towners, as well as drop-in packages and private lessons. Forgot your mat? Rentals are available, as is massage therapy.

• Website: http://www.bikramyogastaug.com
• Address: 700 Anastasia Blvd., St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Children: Babysitting available

TENNIS AT TREATY PARK

★ PUBLIC COURTS

A large and very well-equipped public park offers 6 lighted tennis courts and every other sort of racquet sport: paddle tennis courts, four racquetball courts, and two pickle-ball courts. What’s pickle ball? We’re not really sure.

• Website: Treaty Park online
• Address: 1595 Wildwood Drive, St. Augustine, FL 32086
• Children: Very welcome
• Pets: Dog park at Treaty Park (see page 37)

★ PRIVATE LESSONS AND KIDS’ LESSONS

• Coach: Bobby Ritacco, staugustinetennis@comcast.net
• Phone: (904) 471-2463
Equipment rental

BIKE RENTAL

★ SOLANO CYCLES
- Equipment: beach cruisers and children’s bikes
- Website: http://solanocycle.com
- Address: 32 San Marco Ave, St. Augustine, FL 32084

★ BIG BILL’S BEACH STUFF
- Equipment: beach cruisers & kids’ bikes
- Website: www.bigbillsbeachstuff.com
- Address: 5122 Hwy. A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
- Children: Also rent helmets and kiddie karts/child seats
- Keep in mind: delivery available for a fee

★ A1A CYCLE WORKS
- Equipment: beach cruisers & road bikes
- Website: http://a1acycleworks.com/rental_info.html
- Address: 1059 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine, FL 32080
- Keep in mind: Closed Sundays, minimum 2-day weekend rental

★ PIT SURF SHOP
- Equipment: range of bicycles
- Website: http://www.pitsurfshop.com/beach_rentals.php
- Address: 18 A Street, St. Augustine Beach, FL 32080

★ SURREY UP!
- Equipment: four-wheeled family bicycles
- Website: http://www.surreyup.com
- Address: 606 N Ponce de Leon Blvd., St. Augustine, FL 32084
- Children: great for babies, shade provided
- Pets: pet-friendly

WATERSPORTS & FISHING

★ BAY RAY BOAT RENTALS
- Equipment: pontoons, powerboats & jet-skis
- Website: www.bayrayrentals.com
- Address: 240 Vilano Road, St. Augustine, FL 32080
- Keep in mind: On the ocean side of Vilano, near the fishing pier

★ VILANO SURF HUT
- Equipment: kayaks and surf, skim, paddle and boogie boards
- Website: http://www.skimvilano.com
- Address: 120 Vilano Road, Vilano Beach, FL 32084

★ PIT SURF SHOP
- Equipment: boards (surf, SUP, body, skim), wetsuits, flippers, kayaks
- Website: http://www.pitsurfshop.com
- Address: 18 A Street, St. Augustine Beach, FL 32080

★ SURF STATION
- Equipment: surf and SUP boards
- Website: http://www.surf-station.com
- Address: 1020 Anastasia Blvd., St. Augustine, FL 32080
- Keep in mind: Check website for Crescent Beach location
★ BIG BILL’S BEACH STUFF

• Equipment: boogie boards, flippers and kayaks
• Website: www.bigbillsbeachstuff.com
• Address: 5122 Hwy. A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Keep in mind: delivery available for a fee

★ CAST AND CRUISE

• Equipment: kayaks, boats, bait and tackle
• Website: www.castandcruise.com
• Address: 107 Yacht Club Drive St. Augustine FL, 32084
• Keep in mind: also open at the Vilano Boat Ramp

★ SAILTIME

• Equipment: bareboat and captained sailboats
• Website: http://www.sta-sail.com
• Address: 3076 Harbor Drive, St. Augustine, FL 32084
• Children: Children’s sailing lessons available

★ RAGING WATER SPORTS

• Equipment: jet-skis, motorboats, sailboats, kayaks, pontoon and catamaran
• Website: www.ragingwatersports.com
• Address: 57 Comares Ave, St. Augustine, FL
• Keep in mind: By reservation only in January and February

BEACH EQUIPMENT

★ VILANO SURF HUT

• Equipment: umbrellas, chairs, bocce ball

★ PIT SURF SHOP

• Equipment: beach chairs
• Website: http://www.pitsurfshop.com
• Address: 18 A Street, St. Augustine Beach, FL 32080

★ BIG BILL’S BEACH STUFF

• Equipment: wide selection
• Website: www.bigbillsbeachstuff.com
• Address: 5122 Hwy. A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Keep in mind: delivery available for a fee

MISC. (BABY SUPPLIES, MEDICAL, ETC.)

★ SOLANO CYCLES

• Equipment: strollers, walkers, wheelchairs and mobility scooters
• Website: http://solanocycle.com
• Address: 32 San Marco Ave, St. Augustine, FL 32084

★ BIG BILL’S BEACH STUFF

• Equipment: wide selection of baby supplies, plus BBQs and roll-away beds
• Website: www.bigbillsbeachstuff.com
• Address: 5122 Hwy A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Keep in mind: delivery available for a fee

★ ANDY’S TAYLOR RENTAL

• Equipment: baby supplies, convalescence equipment, roll-away beds and even sewing machines
• Website: www.taylorrentalstaug.com
• Address: 1005 Pope Road, St. Augustine, FL 32080
Palm Coast and Flagler Beach.
Palm Coast

Introduction

Atlantic and Intracoastal waters. Great for golf and tennis.
With the Atlantic and the Intracoastal along its eastern edge, and canals galore, Palm Coast means time in and on the water. Both salt and freshwater afford boating, fishing, and paddling possibilities amongst a huge diversity of wildlife – and it’s a relaxing destination for beach-goers, too. On firmer ground, Palm Coast also welcomes golf and tennis devotees in equal measure.

Palm Coast feel & orientation - what to expect
Palm Coast suits an easy-going, outdoor vacation style for every age group. Use bike and walking trails to explore the area’s length and breadth, stopping at beautiful stretches of beach (some twenty miles including Flagler Beach).

Residents love Palm Coast’s proximity to St. Augustine, Jacksonville and Orlando. Indeed, a Palm Coast vacation base puts the best of the entire region in easy reach. As well, dining out provides a great mix of favorite national chains and tempting local flavor (see page 86 for restaurant recommendations). So, sunglasses on. Where will you start?
History

While the Palm Coast claims neither Nazi landings nor Spanish take-overs, its shorter history isn’t without incident.

- **1970s**: The ITT Corporation (International Telephone & Telegraph) takes on community planning throughout what would become Palm Coast.
- **1999**: Palm Coast becomes an incorporated city and elects its first mayor.
- **2008**: Palm Coast Town Center opens near the city’s hospital, airport and high school to provide a convenient community, retail and business hub.
- **2012**: Plans are underway for new environmental preservation areas, and key city structures (town hall, etc).

### Palm Coast to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville</td>
<td>70 miles</td>
<td>70 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ponte Vedra Beach</td>
<td>55 miles</td>
<td>70 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Augustine</td>
<td>25 miles</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>80-100 miles</td>
<td>90-120 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Using shortest route available, not necessarily the most scenic

City basics

**TRANSPORT**

- **“Will I need a car?”**

  Yes, it’s recommended that you rent one when you land at the airport. Despite a fantastic array of nearby destinations, you’ll need to drive to them. At this time, there is no local public transport.

- **Is it bike-friendly?**

  While Palm Coast has a great network of trails (locals boast they’re the best in the state), they serve more of a leisure role than a logistical one. However, if you love to spend time on your bike, you have some beautiful rides in store. For trail recommendations, please see page 79.
Beach basics

TIDES, SAND AND SWIMMING

Every beach along this coast has its own characteristics (and fans who claim theirs is ‘the best’). Coquina rock formations at the shoreline are a feature of many beaches, which in some places lessens their suitability for swimming. To decide for yourself, visit at low tide. In some spots, you might prefer to wear beach shoes - perhaps a good idea as well for any intrepid, rock-climbing children.

ACCESS AND PARKING

While many rentals, clubs and resorts offer unparalleled beach access, there are some great public access spots in Palm Coast. Particularly recommended are Washington Oaks Gardens State Park (page 79) and the pet-friendly beaches on page 94.

Must see and do (sights, parks & days out)

If you like... history

★ TOP PICK: FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM

• Horses - guided trail riding, equestrian camps, riding lessons
• Historic buildings and farm animals - good for kids and photographers
• Kids’ parties, weddings, plus ongoing events and festivals
An ideal excursion, no matter your group’s size, median age or range of interests. (Yes, really!) For starters, there’s their opening gambit: “Everything at our museum is real. Not a plastic rock in the place.” So far so good?

A visit to ‘FAM’ will suit kids (there are cute animals), photographers (there are ramshackle buildings), not to mention any budding equestrians amongst you. The gift shop manages to be charming not commercial, with farm-stand wares like local honey and home-made soap.

- **History?** Get a dose of old Florida, visiting an 1890s farmhouse and then heading out (on foot or by tractor) to meet Cracker Cows (again, yes, really) and other heritage livestock.
- **Horses?** And then some. Call ahead to book a guided trail ride or to reserve a spot at the popular equestrian camps. The riding trails cover 400 acres on the farm property itself, with room to wander even further on adjoining trails.
- **Activities?** Get as involved with olden-days farm life as you care to. Kids can feed the chickens, pump water and even try out corn-shucking.
- **Events?** Ongoing and annual events include the “Hot & Spicy Festival”, orienteering days, a folk festival, civil war re-enactments, and haunted halloween trails.

**Details**

- Website: http://www.myagmuseum.com
- Address: 7900 Old Kings Road, Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Children: Does Disney have a Florida piney woods rooster hog? Doubt it. If your kids are going to associate Florida with a specific animal, why not add some historic substance?
- Keep in mind: Don’t be put off by the dull name – it’s a great afternoon out. Hard to find though! Closed Monday and Tuesday.

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**If you like... relaxing in nature**

★★ **WASHINGTON OAKS GARDENS STATE PARK**

- Beautiful beach and formal gardens
- Bird, plant and wildlife viewing
- Ocean and river access with picnic and fishing spots
Parents share a guilty secret: once Disney’s done and Marco Polo’s found, they get to choose a destination. For many, this pristine corner of Florida is the perfect antidote to busy days and big crowds. With both beach and garden environments (sitting east and west, respectively, of the A1A), you’ll find relaxation in spades – and plenty of hidden educational opportunities too.

- **The beach:** A retreating tide reveals busy tide pools, packed with anemones, that are always fascinating to explore. If you’ve already visited the Castillo de San Marcos (page 22), you’ll be a ready expert on the beach’s coquina sand. It’s pink (!) and is great for a soul-restoring walk or a determined shell-search. Picnic spots will suggest themselves and, while you eat, watch for local marine-life including right whales, dolphins, hermit crabs and more.

- **The gardens:** A 20-acre formal garden boasts a rose garden, an orchard, plus ancient oaks amongst azaleas, camellias and exotic flower species. It’s home to a great variety of bird-life, including breeding owls and osprey, as well as butterflies.

- **Trails:** Striking a balance between ‘accessible’ and ‘natural’, trails criss-cross the vast oak hammock and front the Intracoastal. Maybe you’ll see a manatee?

- **Events:** Plant sales are ongoing, as well as an annual Citrus Festival (February) and Earth Day celebrations (April).

**Details**

- Website: [http://www.floridastateparks.org/washingtonoaks](http://www.floridastateparks.org/washingtonoaks)
- Address: 6400 N Oceanshore Boulevard, Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Pets: Well-behaved, leashed pets always welcome
- Keep in mind: You might appreciate a dose of bug spray if visiting in the late afternoon or evening. Don’t forget your camera, it’s particularly pretty!

★ **MALACOMPRA ROAD BEACHFRONT PARK**

Five thousand years of Florida history are on display here, across expanses of coquina rock. These other-worldly formations make great photos, whether in some nature shots
or as a background for family pictures. Spread out across this 36-acre park and choose where suits you best – whether you’d rather walk the hammock trails, sunbathe on the quiet beach or picnic (and BBQ) before some late-afternoon volleyball.

- Address: 115 Malacompra Road, Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Children: Playground on site
- Pets: Leashed pets welcome
- Keep in mind: Swimming isn’t recommend due to rocks

★ RIVER TO SEA PRESERVE

Spanning from the beach on the Atlantic side to the Intracoastal waters, find 90 acres of nature to enjoy in dozens of ways. A low-key attraction, nature is its main asset and the trails are very much off the tourist map. Public beach access offers a nice change of scenery, not to mention nature trails and a canoe/kayak launch.

- Website: River to Sea Preserve online
- Address: 9805 N. Oceanshore Blvd., Marineland, FL
- Pets: Pets welcome on a leash
- Keep in mind: Open dawn ‘til dusk

★ ST. JOE WALKWAY AND PALM COAST LINEAR PARK TRAIL

Two outdoor options that total 10 miles of trails, whether taken in the morning with your dog or as a nice after-dinner stroll. Alternatively, use either path as a jogging or cycling route and keep your eyes open for our vivid (and varied) Florida bird-life. (For birding details, please see page 117).

- Website: Trail maps online
- Address: 305 Palm Coast Pkwy, Palm Coast
- Map: St. Joe Walkway (PDF)
- Map: Linear Park Trail (PDF)
- Pets: Yes! Pet-friendly (on-leash)
- Keep in mind: Wheelchair accessible
If you like...to shop

★ EUROPEAN VILLAGE

A newer development with a range of shops and restaurants, imagine a much prettier and more pedestrian-friendly strip mall that aims to meet all your needs in one place. Whether the ‘European’ element adds the desired tone, each establishment has set its own identity - many firmly routed in local Palm Coast life. Even better news: a new frozen yoghurt place is set to open soon.

• Food shops: See ‘The Shoppe’ on page 91
• Restaurants: More detail and bar/lounge ideas on page 86.

General Palm Coast recreation

For tennis and golf detail, see pages 124 and 95, respectively.

★ MARINELAND

Ethical questions about dolphins in captivity aside, Marineland has remained a very popular tourist draw since its 1930s beginning. It’s actually a historic site and was the filming location for the ‘Creature from the Black Lagoon’. Over and above the cost of entry, which allows you to watch strangers swimming with dolphins, you can pay for your own ‘dolphin immersion experience’. Swim with dolphins in shallow water (small fee), deep water (bigger fee), or hold a canvas while they paint it for you (much bigger fee). It’s called “edutainment”.

• Website: http://www.marineland.net
• Address: 9600 Oceanshore Blvd., Palm Coast, FL 32080
• Keep in mind: You can see dolphins in the wild, for free, along much of this coast.
★ AVIA AERO SERVICES, INC.

Can you improve on a romantic sunset with champagne? Quite possibly, if you take to the skies in a private plane tour of Palm Coast and Flagler Beach. Custom tours are available, while three main offerings suit various price brackets.

- Website: http://www.aviaaero.com/aerialtour.html
- Address: 281 Old Moody Blvd, Palm Coast, FL 32164

ANNUAL

★ WINGS OVER FLAGLER AIR SHOW

Sky-diving and air acrobatics, plus demonstrations with helicopters and heritage aircraft make a great weekend for the whole family. See you in September?

- Date: September
- Website: http://www.wingsoverflagler.com
- Address: Kids’ zone with aviation activities
- Pets: Prohibited

ONGOING

★ PALM COAST RACE SERIES (RUNNING)

An on-going road race series with an event approximately every 4-6 weeks. Distances range from 5-15K, depending on the event, and many have a holiday theme or charitable cause.

- Website: Race Series online
- Children: Some races allow strollers, check website for details.

★ PALM COAST ROLLER DERBY

If you thought Palm Coast was all dolphins and sunshine, a night with the derby girls means a certain change of pace. Team members include ‘Dawn-N-Dirty’, ‘Genycyde’ and ‘Kalamity Kay’. Check the website for upcoming events or ‘adopt a derby girl’ and receive an autographed photo. Tempting?

- Website: http://palmcoastrollerderby.com
- Keep in mind: “No tattoos required but are looked upon kindly.”
Senior and adult programs
See the Palm Coast municipal government site for details about a great range of seniors’ activities – many of which are weekly fixtures and welcome visitors. Amongst those on the calendar:

- Lunch n’ Lectures
- Wood Carvers Workshops
- Women’s Self Defense Class
- Co-ed recreational sports program
- Website: Program listing online

Great for children and/or rainy days

BOWLING

★ COQUINA LANES

Imagine a bowling lane that makes its own blue-cheese dressing for house buffalo wings. Revolutionary stuff! A great and very family-friendly bowling alley that happily accommodates groups and birthday parties. A sports bar extends the options if you want to make it a night out.

- Website: http://www.coquinalanes.com
- Address: 11 Old Kings Rd N., Palm Coast, FL 32135
- Keep in mind: Cosmic bowling on Friday and Saturday nights

MOVIES

★ EPIC THEATER

A local Florida chain with a mom-and-pop feel. Concert features are often shown, and generous senior/child discounts are available.

- Website: http://www.epictheatres.com
- Address: 1185 Central Avenue, Palm Coast, FL
• Keep in mind: Get there early to grab a rocking-chair love seat!

PAINT YOUR OWN POTTERY

★ ART & SOUL STUDIO

A gorgeous little place run by a Palm Coast native and former teacher. Check the website for upcoming theme nights, such as father/daughter, ladies’ night and evenings just for couples. Kids’ camps run during the summer.

• Website: http://theartandsoulstudio.com
• Address: 25 Pine Cone Drive, Unit 3B, Palm Coast, FL 32164
• Children: Yes!
• Keep in mind: Closed Monday and Tuesday

Worried you’ll have bored teens?

Funny that you can take a kid to a beautiful beach, and they’d rather be home on Facebook. If you’re enjoying the year/s where your teen makes their boredom felt family-wide, we hope this guide works preventative wonders. Throughout, you’ll find mention of week-long day-camps, available across a whole range of interests (from Space Camp to Surf Camp). We’ve also listed sites with welcoming, teen-friendly drop-in time at skate parks, pottery studios and…. the mall. (Sometimes a new pair of board shorts and flip-flops is all it takes). Why not give this guidebook to all your family members, and have everyone (kids included) choose a few activities they’d love to try as a family. Who knows, you might be strapped to a kite-board before you know it.

Pets: parks and vets

More than likely, your dog is readier for travel to Palm Coast than you are. The only requirements are that his collar bears ID and proper registration, and that you bring proof of rabies vaccine. You’ll find that pets are welcome in many places, however they must remain leashed unless otherwise stated (such as at the fenced local dog park, details below). This link will point you to area dog parks, for all your trip activities.
★ ALOHA CRITTERS OF PALM COAST

Pet-sitting and dog-walking – very convenient if you’re taking a day trip or planning a full day of golfing.

- Website: http://www.alohacritters.com
- Address: 26 Barbera Lane, Palm Coast, FL, 32137

★ PET SMART

- Address: Palm Coast Landing, 5100 E Highway 100, Palm Coast, FL 32164

★ JAMES F. HOLLAND MEMORIAL DOG PARK

A new, fenced dog park open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily.

- Website: James F. Holland dog park online
- Address: 18 Florida Park Drive North, Palm Coast, FL 32137

★ BANFIELD PET HOSPITAL

- Phone: (386) 437-7017
- Address: 5270 East Highway 100, Palm Coast, FL 32164

★ SAFE HAVEN VETERINARY HOSPITAL

- Phone: (386) 446-9099
- Address: 30 Lupi Ct #109, Palm Coast, FL 32137

Restaurants

★ AI JAPANESE RESTAURANT

Local seafood worked into delicious and artistic sushi creations, not to mention other favorite Japanese fare. Why not try: A custom sushi plate made to your preference.

- Cuisine: Japanese
- Website: Ai Japanese Facebook
- Address: 208 Saint Joe Plaza Drive Palm Coast, FL 32164
- Keep in mind: Hidden in a shopping center – hard to find!
★ ATLANTIC GRILLE

Dine absolutely ocean-front at the main resort restaurant at Hammock Beach. Come for breakfast or lunch, or save room for a very special dinner. Why not try: Calamari “Fries”.

- Cuisine: Contemporary seafood
- Website: [Atlantic Grille online](#)
- Address: 200 Ocean Crest Drive, Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Keep in mind: Voted Flagler’s Best Atmosphere

★ DOMINIC’S DELI & EATERY

Clean counters and a creative menu – this is the deli of your dreams. Whether you dine in, or take-out a most delectable picnic, you’ll be back to Dominic’s at the first opportunity. (Or - dare we say – there’s delivery too!). Choose from a full breakfast menu, as well as daily specials and sandwich lists like you would not believe. Save room for: Cheesecake Skyscraper.

- Cuisine: Sandwiches
- Website: [http://dominicsdeliandeatery.com](http://dominicsdeliandeatery.com)
- Address: 160 Cypress Point Parkway Palm Coast, FL 32164
- Children: Yes! ‘Dominic’ is the owners’ 4-year-old. Kids’ menu very much in evidence.
- Keep in mind: Voted Flagler’s Best Deli

★ CAPTAIN’S BBQ, BAIT & TACKLE

Come by land or come by water, just come hungry. Captain’s boasts high-quality ingredients and an incredible ambiance (live blues, Spanish moss and a sand parking lot). Best of all – everything is home-made. Why not try: the pulled pork.

- Cuisine: Southern BBQ
- Website: [http://www.captainsbbq.com](http://www.captainsbbq.com)
- Address: 5862 North Oceanshore Boulevard Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Keep in mind: Lunch and dinner daily

★ JT’S SEAFOOD SHACK

A locals’ favorite for cheap and cheerful Happy Hours, and always-fresh seafood. JT’s has a tin roof – great atmosphere, especially if it’s raining. The closest spot to grab a
bite outside of Hammock Beach Resort, you might soon be recognized as a local
yourself. Save room for: Fried Florida Gator Tail.

- Cuisine: Seafood
- Website: http://www.jtseafoodshack.com
- Address: 5224 North Oceanshore Blvd., Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: Live music on the weekends

★ KOKORO SUSHI BAR & JAPANESE BISTRO

With a brand new location and total remodel, “Kokoro 2.0” is set to better previous
successes and increase its large local fan-base. Why not try: Steak cooked on a
sizzling lava rock.

- Cuisine: Steakhouse and sushi bar
- Website: Kokoro Facebook
- Address: 101 Palm Harbor Parkway, Suite 123, Palm Coast, FL
- Keep in mind: Check their Facebook or Twitter for re-opening details in European
Village, November 2012.

★ LA PIAZZA CAFÉ

Reserve your table early and you’ll have a romantic evening to look forward to –
dining under grapevines on a candlelit patio. Sauces are made in-house, and the basil
and oregano are grown in the restaurant herb garden. Weekend breakfast offers a
chance to return yet again. Save room for: Hand-made Lobster Ravioli With Shrimp In
Vodka Sauce.

- Cuisine: Italian
- Website: http://www.lapiazzacafe.com
- Address: 101 Palm Harbor Parkway Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: Voted Flagler’s Most Romantic Restaurant.

★ OUTBACK STEAKHOUSE

Two choices for a tasty steak dinner: dine in-house, or make great use of your vacation
rental’s patio, by ordering online and picking up your lunch or dinner curb-side. If
you’ll be short on time on a particular evening (late golf game?), you can save a future
• Cuisine: Steak and salads
• Website: [Outback Steakhouse Palm Coast](http://www.outback.com)
• Address: 45 Plaza Drive Palm Coast, FL 32137
• Children: Kids’ menu available
• Keep in mind: Spanish menu and gluten-free items available

★ CARRABBA’S ITALIAN GRILL

A brand new location promises consistent favorites: $5 Happy Hours, sports specials, and stuffed pastas. A great choice for any size of appetite, whether you choose to eat in or take out.

• Cuisine: Pizza and other Italian
• Website: [http://www.carrabbas.com](http://www.carrabbas.com)
• Address: Cobblestone Village, 260 Cypress Edge Drive, Palm Coast, FL
• Children: Kids’ menu available (as is gluten-free)
• Keep in mind: Car-side carry-out available, with online ordering.

★ SAKURA JAPANESE STEAKHOUSE

Introduce grandparents to hibachi-style dining, or stop in for a quick sushi-fix for lunch. All your favorites are on offer, starting with edamame, to sushi and sashimi combo plates. A Thai menu adds further options for a group with mixed appetites. Save room for: Green Tea Ice Cream.

• Cuisine: Japanese
• Website: [http://www.sakurafl.com/index.html](http://www.sakurafl.com/index.html)
• Address: 260 Cypress Edge Dr, Palm Coast, FL 32164
• Children: Kids’ menu available
• Keep in mind: Portion sizes are very big

★ SONNY’S B-B-Q

Take-out and catering options available, or dine in-house at this trusty, tasty Florida chain. The menu delights in its down-home hokey-ness, with the rare vegetable tucked safely away in “Sonny’s Garden of Eatin’”. Save room for: Homestyle Banana Pudding.

• Cuisine: BBQ
• Website: [http://www.sonnysbbq.com](http://www.sonnysbbq.com)
• Address: 25 Cypress Edge Drive Palm Coast, FL 32137
• Children: Kids’ menu and coloring books available

★ THAI KORNER

The other Palm Coast sushi/Thai combo restaurant – Thai Korner puts its curry in the front seat. A sleek and modern little restaurant, it’s a cool spot for both lunch and dinner. Why not try: Grouper Supparod.

• Cuisine: Thai and sushi
• Website: http://www.thaikorner.com
• Address: 1280 Palm Coast Parkway Southwest Palm Coast, FL 32137
• Children: Kids’ menu available
• Keep in mind: Specials and gluten-free menu available

★ THAI BY THAI

With the restaurant’s owner running the kitchen, you’re assured of a meal made with great care. The proof? Your side of rice might just arrive heart-shaped. Why not try: Beef Salad in chili-lime juice.

• Cuisine: Thai
• Website: Thai By Thai Facebook
• Address: 124 Palm Coast Parkway Northeast, Palm Coast, FL 32137
• Keep in mind: Open for lunch and dinner, gluten-free requests accommodated

For beer and cigars

★ THE HUMIDOR CIGAR BAR & LOUNGE

A great hang-out spot with a friendly staff happy to recommend an evening or celebratory cigar. Beer and a solid wine selection keep non-smokers satiated, whether you spend ten minutes or all night in the lounge. It’s got leather armchairs, so you might get comfy quickly.

• Website: The Humidor Cigar Bar & Lounge Facebook
• Address: 101 Palm Harbor Parkway Palm Coast, FL 32137
• Keep in mind: Closed Mondays
Supermarkets & amenities

★ PUBLIX (TWO PALM COAST LOCATIONS)
  • Hammock Beach: 5415 North Oceanshore Boulevard, Palm Coast, FL
  • Palm Harbor: 298 Palm Coast Parkway Northeast, Palm Coast, FL

★ SUPER WALMART
  • Address: 174 Cypress Point Parkway, Palm Coast, FL 32164

★ SUPER TARGET
  • Address: Palm Coast Landing, 5100 E Highway 100, Palm Coast, FL 32164

★ HAMMOCK WINE & CHEESE SHOPPE
  A great local shop whether you need an intro to wine, a recommendation, or expert help for something specific. Shelves are stocked with delicious accompaniments for a gourmet vacation and memorable beach picnics.
  • Website: www.hammockwineshop.com
  • Address: 5368 N. Oceanshore Blvd., Palm Coast, FL 32137
  • Keep in mind: Closed Monday. Inquire about regular tasting events and live music.
Ocean Hammock

Including Cinnamon Beach, Hammock Beach Resort, Hammock Dunes and Ocean Hammock and the golf courses.

Overview

A resort area with two hammock benefits. You might first picture a rope hammock – maybe feet up, sipping a pink drink against the sunset. Absolutely, you’re in the right place. However, the local use of ‘hammock’ denotes a hardwood forest – of great importance to maintaining a healthy ecosystem. At Ocean Hammock you have both – a gold-star vacation with expansive natural surroundings. The hammock is an attractive and natural buffer from nearby beach towns, making Ocean Hammock a distinct community. For immediate beach access and a bike-able, walkable community, this development is an ideal choice.

History

• **2000**: Ocean Hammock Club opens.
• **2003**: Michelle Wie wins the US Women’s Amateur Public Links at Ocean Hammock Club.
• **2006**: Bobby Ginn (of The Ginn Company, later Ginn Resorts) buys Ocean Hammock Golf Course and the adjacent Lodge, adding these to the offerings at Hammock Beach Club and Resort.
• **2007**: In a second purchase, Bobby Ginn buys the club which rounds out Ocean Hammock’s amenities. Also in 2007, the Ocean Course at Hammock Beach hosts a championship for the PGA Tour. Want to play it yourself?
Beach basics

SAND, SWIMMING AND ... CINNAMON?

While low-tide paddling reveals some of the best shells along the coast, beach shoes are recommended for soft feet. Swimming requires some caution as a rocky coquina reef sits close to shore. As for the cinnamon? Tiny crushed shells give the beach its namesake color, mixed into a warm sand. The resulting landscape is ever so beautiful and you’ll never tire of looking at the shore while you relax with a guilty-pleasure beach book.

Ocean Hammock ideas

★ THE SPA AT HAMMOCK BEACH RESORT

Scrubbing and soothing you with the best of local offerings, your spa experience can be as long and luxurious as you like – probably including coquina and sea salt products.

- Website: http://www.hammockbeach.com
- Address: 200 Ocean Crest Drive, Palm Coast, FL 32137

★ ECO TOURS WITH HAMMOCK WATER SPORTS

Stick close to home and yet see it all; perfect convenience if you’re staying locally. This eco-tour outfitter offers pick-up service to and from Hammock Beach and the estuary at nearby Bings Landing. Call ahead to make a reservation, or simply stop by to rent boards. Group rates are offered, call for details.

- Website: Hammock Water Sports Facebook
- Address: 5054 N Oceanshore Blvd., Palm Coast, FL 32137
• Children: Yes! Very family-friendly with kids’ lessons available.

★ SUNDANCER CRUISE

At one hundred seventeen feet, the Sundancer understandably comes with some cool stuff. Gadgets, gear, plus two bars…and a fireplace. She sails every Sunday for both brunch and dinner cruises, as well as a Happy Hour at sea for Wednesday cocktail cruises. Want her all to yourself? Private charters are available, and allow access to the ship’s dressing room – should you wish to change into something more nautical.

• Website: Sundancer Cruise online
• Address: 200 Ocean Crest Drive, Palm Coast, FL 32137
• Keep in mind: Reservations recommended

★ BEACH PICNICS

While many of our restaurant recommendations and tips for beach access point you in the right direction, guests at Hammock Beach can take the lazy route and order one of four old-fashioned picnics. Choose wisely – only one includes fried chicken.

• Website: http://www.hammockbeach.com

Ocean Hammock parks (pet-friendly)

★ JUNGLE HUT ROAD PARK

If you’ve ever wanted to combine dog-walking with spotting ruby-throated hummingbirds, here’s your chance. From summer to winter months bird-life varieties are ever-changing, and easy parking makes this a great spot for your morning and evening walks. Did we mention it’s got boardwalk beach access?

• Website: Jungle Hut Road Park online
• Address: 125 Jungle Hut Rd, Palm Coast, FL 32137
★ OLD SALT ROAD BEACH PARK

Your closest bet for a pet-friendly park if staying at Ocean Hammock. Coquina rocks near the shore make this more a walker’s beach than a swimmer’s, but it’s yet another place to combine nature and exercise. A keen eye might be rewarded with a right whale sighting. Staying elsewhere? There’s ample parking, come on down!

• Website: Old Salt Road Beach Park online
• Address: 16th Road, Palm Coast, FL 32137

Golf - courses, clubs and lessons

Palm Coast Golf

★ PALM HARBOR GOLF CLUB

If your golf is more of a social outing than a competitive exercise, this fun and friendly course is a great match. You won’t beat the price, and an attentive staff add further value.

• Website: http://www.palmharborgolfclub.com
• Address: 20 Palm Harbor Drive Palm Coast, FL 32137
• Children: Junior lessons available
• Keep in mind: Check website for current promotions

★ GRAND HAVEN GOLF CLUB (PRIVATE, BUT....)

While strictly a members’ only club, there’s a ‘Member For a Day’ option at the price of a “community presentation” and lifestyle pitch. If the cost/benefit equation makes sense for you, this Jack Nicklaus course comes very highly recommended and food is said to be great quality. How eagerly can you play along to a sales pitch?

• Website: http://www.grandhavenpalmcoast.com
• Address: 500 Riverfront Dr Palm Coast, FL 32137
THE GRAND CLUB

Both courses share an excellent clubhouse facility and friendly staff. With enough time, why not play both and choose a favorite? Otherwise, we offer a few hints to choose the best fit.

★ PINE COURSE AT THE GRAND CLUB

A well-recommended course with reasonable rates. While some wear and tear suggests the course’s popularity, eleven holes have water features and ensure it’s fun and a good challenge to play.

• Details: Palmer-Seay design, 7074-yard layout
• Website: http://thegrandclub.com/pines-course
• Keep in mind: Sunday buffet brunch at the clubhouse counts as pre-game carbo-loading.

★ CYPRESS COURSE AT THE GRAND CLUB

Set against an untouched environment, Cypress Course play takes you past natural lakes and wetlands. It’s a challenge all right, and recent renovations crown a morning or afternoon’s play.

• Details: Gary Player design, 6,591 yards
• Website: http://thegrandclub.com/cypress-course
• Address: 53 Easthampton Blvd., Palm Coast, FL 32164
• Keep in mind: Check website for weekly ‘Nine and Dine’ events

Golf lessons

PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL COACHING

★ MARY HAFEMAN

PGA & LPGA Professional Golf Instructor:

• 1-hour private lesson $120.00*
• 30-minute private lesson $70.00*
Junior lessons take 25% off prices.
* includes Florida Sales taxes

CYPRESS CLUB CLINICS

★ CINNAMON BEACH GOLF EXPERIENCE PACKAGE

Enjoy a great day at the links by starting off with three hours of instruction on the Cypress Golf Club’s practice range with Mary Hafeman, PGA & LPGA professional. The instruction will be customized with you in advance of the date and will be based on your personal needs. Following golf, discuss programs and lesson details at lunch in the Cypress Club’s casual restaurant with a golf professional. Work further on your game with 18 holes of golf on the Gary Player-designed Grand Club’s Cypress Course. A great chance to work on course management.

Package includes:
- 3 hours of golf instruction at Cypress Club
- Lunch with golf professional
- 18 holes of golf (with cart) at the Grand Club’s Cypress Club
- 3-to-1 student /instructor ratio maximum
- Unlimited range balls
- Special pricing to Mary Hafeman Golf Experience online membership
- One (1) person $470.00*
- With two participants each (1) person $295.00*
- With three participants each (1) person $250.00*
- * includes Florida Sales taxes

★ FAMILY GOLF 101

A great day of golf with your family whether you are new to the game or you’re more seasoned players. Enjoy family time on the practice range with a professional for two hours of quality coaching and instruction. Scheduled time is flexible for morning or afternoons based on your personal needs. Guaranteed fun and enjoyment during a wonderful learning experience at the Grand Club’s Cypress Club.
• 2 hours with golf professional on practice range
• Unlimited range balls
• Special pricing into Mary Hafeman Golf Experience online membership
• Rental clubs available for use but must be pre-arranged.
• Family Rate: $275.00*
• * includes Florida Sales taxes

★ CUSTOMIZED GOLF CLINIC AND GOLF SCHOOLS

Develop your own clinic to learn alongside family and friends. You’ll enjoy the group atmosphere, share savings and improve your game. We will contact you in advance of your program date to discuss and assess your needs, in order to create a day customized to your specific goals. We guarantee that you’ll walk away with increased skills and a smile on your face. This package can be booked for multiple days.

• 3 hours of golf instruction at Cypress Club
• Lunch with PGA or LPGA professional
• 3-to-1 student /instructor ratio maximum
• Unlimited range balls
• The format to be determined with instructor and student input. This clinic can be expanded to multiple days.
• Package rate (1) person $390.00*
• With two participants - each person $210.00*
• With three participants - each person $ 150.00*
• * includes Florida Sales taxes

★ WOMEN’S GOLF PACKAGE (2 DAYS)

Our women’s golf package is specifically geared for female players; Mary Hafeman leads instruction and, as a former LPGA Tour player and award winning ‘Golf for Women Top 50’ instructor, you’re in good hands.

• Maximum of 3 to 1 student / teacher ratio
• Two half-days 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
• Total of 12 hours’ comprehensive instruction with on-course supervised playing time
• Short game skills including putting, chipping, pitching and bunker play
• Mental approach on how to score lower
• Lunch with professional each day
• 9 holes of golf each day with professional at Cypress Club
• Unlimited practice balls during practice sessions
• Complimentary beverages during academy time
• Golf specific stretching and warm up exercises
• Program includes follow-up written personalized tips and advice
• Special pricing into Mary Hafeman Golf Experience online membership
• Package Price One (1) person $1,545.00*
  • With two participants …each (1) person $820.00*
  • With three participants each (1) person $ 580.00*
  • * includes Florida Sales taxes

ADDITIONAL GOLF PROGRAMS

Can be customized to fit your needs. Programs will be developed with your needs in mind.

• Please call Vacation Rental Pros Accounting Dept.
• Phone: (904)-385-3888 option 3
Flagler Beach

Introduction

Want a beach vacation? Here’s why Flagler gets top bill: its I-95 exit is closer to the ocean than any other point in Florida. Some call it a beach town, others the quaintest seaside village they know – whatever your definition of scale, it’s a community that favors history, nature and ‘the simple things’. Namely: outdoor space to enjoy friends and family, plus great food and fish every which way.

The wider Flagler County boasts 19 miles of beach, 44 parks, and 10 golf courses – not bad for “Florida’s quiet side”. Flagler fans are adamant they’ve found the best spot on the state’s Atlantic coast and, with two five-star, home-made ice cream shops, converts are easily made.

History

• 1885: Henry Flagler, a northern oil tycoon, first comes to St. Augustine and begins investing in hotels and infrastructure. These were high society fixtures, where guests wintered (as a verb).

• 1909: Plots of land are listed for sale. Incredibly, families mail-order their new life in Flagler from the Bunnell Development Company.

• 1914: Developer George Moody builds the first beach house in Flagler, known at the time as Ocean City.

• 1915: ‘Dixie Highway’ is built, starting in Jacksonville and ending at Flagler Beach. Finally, the journey to Flagler is shortened.

• 1916: Busy as ever, George Moody builds the first casino.
• **1925:** Owing to confusion about Ocean City, NJ and Ocean City, MD, the town has to change its name at the time of incorporation. With a grateful nod to its founder, it becomes Flagler Beach. The very same Mr. Moody becomes its first mayor.

• **1931:** Fog causes an unscheduled plane to land in Flagler. Its pilot is Charles Lindbergh.

(See the Flagler Beach Museum (page 102) for the rest of the story – we don’t want to ruin all the surprises!)

**Town basics**

**TRANSPORT**

As in Palm Coast, a rental car is highly recommended for the duration of your stay and will really enhance your enjoyment of Flagler Beach and beyond.

**VISITOR CENTER**

A central visitor center is a great first-stop in town. Helpful staff have tips for entertainment and restaurants, as well as maps, coupons and nature updates. Ten minutes later, you’ll feel like a local.

- Address: 200 S. Oceanshore Blvd. (A1A) across from the pier
- Keep in mind: Closed Sunday.

**Beach basics**

**SAND, TIDES AND SAFETY**

With a very gently sloping shore, Flagler Beach is great for paddling, wading or new swimmers. While shells are scarce, you might find sharks’ teeth and the orange sand remains firm enough for running. As along the rest of the coast, currents can be strong and require due caution. If coming in the summer, you’ll find lifeguards on duty on Flagler Beach itself. In the winter? You might think twice about a winter swim, anyway!
CARS AND BEACH ACCESS

A relaxed and uncrowded family beach, Flagler is free from cars. Its public access points are understandably more popular on weekends, and parking can be hard to find. Arrive early (with a breakfast picnic?) and you should be in luck. Much of Flagler’s access is down beach boardwalks and stairs, should that affect how much you pack for a day out.

Must see and do (sights, parks & days out)

Town sights

★ FLAGLER BEACH PIER

Built in 1927, the pier has seen its share of fish and (acknowledging its handful of rebuilds), storms too. Considered the town’s hub, you’ll enjoy a lively fisherman’s atmosphere with great people-watching as this beach town comes and goes. Weekends are the busiest. Want to fish? Licenses are not required at the pier, just pay a small daily rate and rent a pole and bait at the entrance. Only twenty poles are allowed on the pier at a time. Should you find it full, take an hour’s detour to Flagler Beach Museum, below.

- Website: http://www.cityofflaglerbeach.com/thepier.html
- Address: 215 S. Oceanshore Blvd. Flagler Beach, FL 32136

★ FLAGLER BEACH MUSEUM

“From the Stone Age to the Space Age” is the improbable, but fascinating, arc of Flagler’s story. It starts with Indian artifacts (fossils, tools, etc) and spans the centuries to the town’s connection with the 1960s Space Race. You won’t take very long to see
its exhibits but this sweet museum is a proud town fixture. While here, ask for a map for the self-guided historic walking tour around Flagler’s downtown.

- Website: http://www.flaglerbeachmuseum.com
- Address: 207 S. Central Avenue, Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Children: If you make it brief, you might hold their attention
- Keep in mind: Open 7 days a week

If you... like history

★ PRINCESS PLACE PRESERVE LODGE

It takes a minute to get your head around quite how this homestead came to house a princess. Though your guided tour offers greater nuance, the ‘Princess’ in question is the widow of Rich Husband #1 (who built the lodge), and the eventual wife of Rich Husband #3 (exiled Russian prince). Born Angela Mills of New York state, she had quite a life!

That’s just a portion of a great story set in beautiful old Florida grounds. In another twist, the estate boundaries date to 1791, a grant from the Spanish. Today, all 1105 acres remain in their natural state.

The house itself was finished in 1888 and would have been the best-known house in all of Florida at the time. It included not only Florida’s biggest citrus grove but also an indoor, heated pool (structure since destroyed).

With water on all sides, Flagler’s oldest remaining estate is wonderfully maintained and makes a fascinating few hours’ exploring. Following your tour, wander the grounds and look for nesting bald eagles. Hiking trails (1 to 5 miles long) loop all around the preserve, and flora/fauna include 80-foot oak trees, bobcats and foxes. Horsey people will be thrilled to see there are equestrian trails as well.

- Website: Princess Place Preserve Lodge online
- Map: Trail map
- Address: 2500 Princess Place Rd., Palm Coast, FL
- Keep in mind: Open daily, with free tours on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.
★ BULOW PLANTATION RUINS HISTORIC STATE PARK

A great spot for a hot day, the ruins are entirely shaded and will delight shutter-bugs to no end (speaking of which – bug spray might be a good idea in this natural setting). The drive to and from is very scenic, add a half hour’s stop on to any day’s excursion. Awaiting your exploration are the ruins of a 19th century sugar cane plantation and mill.

If keen to keep going and see more while visiting, a nature trail (the Bulow Woods Trail, approx. 7 miles) will take you through one of the south’s biggest oak forests. The star attraction is the ‘Fairchild Oak’ – the grandaddy tree. Quiz family members to identify animal tracks along the way: deer, raccoon or something else? Canoes are also available to rent, if you’d prefer to paddle!

• Website: http://www.floridastateparks.org/bulowplantation
• Address: 3165 Old King Road, Flagler Beach, Florida 32110
• Pets: Leashed dogs welcome

If you like... relaxing in nature

★ GAMBLE ROGERS MEMORIAL STATE RECREATION AREA

• Beach and intracoastal access, with ramps
• Wildlife viewing & nature trails
• Bike, kayak and canoe rental

Where a state park board might think, “We’ve got a beautiful beach, great nature trails and water access galore”, and leave it at that – Gamble Rogers kept improving. In fact, they offer the Shangri-La of park services. Never has your day’s admission stretched so far, with activity options for the whole family including Turtle Talks, Crabbing for Beginners, Salt-marsh Kayak Tours, and – winning hands-down for the rhyme alone – ‘Tai Chi By The
Sea*. (And many other events besides – check the park’s packed calendar for details).

A must-see point along the **Florida Birding Trail**, Gamble’s beach is home to great bird-life including pelicans, osprey and egrets. Beach ramps are wheelchair accessible and bikes/kayak/canoe rentals can be found at the ranger station.

- Website: [Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area online](#)
- Address: 3100 S. State Road A1A, Flagler Beach, Florida 32136
- Pets: Yes! Pets on-leash are very welcome.
- See also: Details on ‘Full Moon Hikes’ (page 116).

★ **GRAHAM SWAMP PRESERVE TRAILS**

Bringing nature into the 21st century, this biking/hiking trail invites iPhone and Android devotees to participate in its smartphone tours. Find eight QR codes along the 2-mile trail to learn the site’s history, with tons of geology and ecology thrown in for added interest. Definitely one for teenagers, they can Instagram the whole thing too.

For the slightly more intrepid, a 7-mile **intermediate mountain bike trail** is also available – lots of ups and downs, curves and swerves, so bring your good pair of knees.

- Website: [Gramp Swamp Preserve Trails online](#)
- Address: 1125 Old Kings Rd., Palm Coast, FL
- Pets: Leashed pets welcome

★ **VARN PARK**

The closest public beach access south of Ocean Hammock, Varn Park has eight acres of beach-front and offers visitors great opportunity for watching bird-life along the shore. As well, whether you’ll watch or participate, this is the spot for **surf fishing**. The day’s catch might include blues, whiting, flounder, snapper or a total surprise.

- Website: [Varn Park online](#)
- Address: 3665 North Oceanshore Blvd., Flagler Beach
- Pets: Leashed pets welcome.
- Keep in mind: Wheelchair accessible
★ BETTY STEFLIK MEMORIAL PRESERVE

For a low-key afternoon when you’ve seen everything else, this preserve covers 217 acres of marsh and coastal scrub land along the Intracoastal. Boardwalks meander here and there, letting you stroll at your pace – whether with a dog or human companion. That is, unless the fishing pier and boat launch don’t entice you to the water?

• Website: Betty Steflik Memorial Preserve online
• Address: 815 Moody Lane, Flagler Beach, FL 32136
• Keep in mind: Open from dawn until 11 p.m.
• Pop quiz: Who was paying attention on page 101 and can determine where ‘Moody Lane’ got its name?

If you... like art

★ GALLERY OF LOCAL ART (GOLA)

A little gallery by the sea, showcasing the best local talent and an occasional classroom for art classes. Flagler’s quaint sense of small beach town is put on best display here. Stop by to choose an affordable and lasting memory to frame and take home.

• Website: http://galleryoflocalart.com
• Address: 208 South Central Ave. Flagler Beach FL 32136
• Children: Kids’ art classes held regularly
• Keep in mind: A great idea for family Christmas presents! Find works priced from about $15.
If you like to shop

This is a great town for browsing – without an itinerary you’ll be delighted to stumble into used book stores, art galleries and – on Fridays and Saturdays – a beach-side farmers’ market.

★ FLAGLER BEACH FARMERS’ MARKET

Can your local farmers’ market recall the seventies? Flagler Beach’s weekly local food-fest began in 1979, meaning its second generation are now regular customers.

Whether you’re stocking up for your vacation rental, or filling the trunk with local Flagler goodies to take home – this is as easy as one-stop shops can be. Locally grown produce and seafood abound, plus jars of gooey honey, plants and fresh baked goods guaranteed to wake you up on an early morning shopping trip. See you at sunrise?

- Website: http://www.flaglerbeachfarmersmarket.com
- Address: Intersection of SR 100 & South Central Ave
- Keep in mind: Every Friday and Saturday from sunrise

★ EVIA’S BY THE SEA

A gallery-cum-gift shop just north of the pier. Packed with antiques and treasures of all sizes, there’s always something to call you inside while window shopping.

- Address: 909 N Oceanshore Boulevard, Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Keep in mind: Closed Saturdays
Great for children and/or rainy days

★ SUMMER JR. LIFEGUARD PROGRAM
Weekly camps run through the summer and are a fun, engaging introduction to ocean rescue techniques (and, possibly, a lucrative summer job in future years!). Get that college fund started....

• Contact: Tom Gillin - tgillin@cityofflaglerbeach.com
• Children: Beginner camp for elementary and middle school-aged children, and an advanced camp for those aged 9-15.

★ ROLLER SKATING RINK (FLAGLER COUNTY YOUTH CENTER)
Outdoor rollerblading or roller-hockey – for free!

• Website: Flagler County Youth Center online
• Address: 5500 E. Highway 100, Palm Coast, FL

★ OH HAPPY CLAY
Paint your own pottery for a perfect, DIY souvenir of your vacation. Staying a bit longer or stuck with a spate of rainy days? Art classes run regularly, teaching water color, stained glass techniques, and more.

• Contact: 986-5481 or OhHappyClay@live.com
• Address: 204 S. Daytona Ave, Flagler Beach, FL 32136
• Children: Welcomes kids and offers birthday parties
• Keep in mind: Closed Monday and Tuesday

★ LEHIGH TRAIL
Another shady trail, perfectly paved for a smooth bike ride. Walk it with your dog, or pick up the pace for a jog of up to eight miles. You might even dust off your RollerBlades and do it at speed! This one is recommended for kids especially as it’s
very flat and under tree-cover the whole way, with sufficient places to stop and look for frogs and other creatures.

- Website: [Lehigh Trail online](#)
- Address: Belle Terre Parkway to Colbert Lane, Palm Coast, FL

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### Pets: parks and vets

The biggest rule to keep in mind as you enjoy the Flagler area with your pet? Fines for failing to clean up after it are $500 – enforced. Comply in that regard and you’ve got one of the most pet-friendly places in the country to explore together. Flagler Beach itself welcomes leashed pets along a 6-mile stretch (except near the pier, between North and South 10th streets). Keep your leash to an eight-foot length (max) and off you go! (That’s *mush* to you very northern dogs).

**★ THE BARK SPOT**

A full-range of pet services including grooming, natural food and treat retail, and that ongoing temptation to put your pet in an outfit. A great, friendly spot if you run out of treats or think your guy deserves a new vacation toy.

- Website: [http://thebarkspot.com](http://thebarkspot.com)
- Address: 406 Beach Village Drive, Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Keep in mind: See website for online coupons. Closed Monday.

**★ WADSWORTH PARK**

Sixty thousand square feet of doggy bliss. Big and little dogs are separated with their own fenced play areas, while owners can grab a bit of shade on a park bench. A great spot to tire them out before heading off to enjoy the day together.

- Website: [Wadsworth Park online](#)
- Address: 2200 Moody Blvd., Flagler Beach, FL
- Keep in mind: Open dawn to dusk
Restaurants

Come to Flagler Beach in a happy hour frame of mind and you’ll be very happy indeed. A bright mixture of both chain and independent restaurants, bars and cafés are found in town, though most announce last call by 9:00 p.m. or so. All the better to get to bed early and enjoy an Atlantic sunrise the next morning.

★ THE BIG EASY CAFÉ

A casual spot to start a lazy morning or enjoy a slow-food kind of lunch or dinner. Weekly dinner specials invite repeat (and delighted) customers – they’re announced in advance online, a direct response to diners’ requests. Possibly the prettiest place to grab a cup of Café du Monde coffee! Save room for: bread pudding.

- Cuisine: New Orleans
- Website: http://bigeasycafe.net
- Address: 213 South 2nd Street Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Keep in mind: Closed Sunday and Monday. Dinner on Friday only.

★ BLUE AT THE TOPAZ

The hotel restaurant of a Flagler landmark, this spot boasts incomparable views and a handful of sought-after tables on the Victorian property’s wrap-around porch. (Note that you’ll need a group of six or more to make a reservation). Strangely, it enjoys equal reputation for a superb burger – suggesting a more casual beach definition of fine dining. Lunch or dinner lets you scale the fanciness accordingly, or simply skip the
food and grab an ocean-front glass of wine. Why not try: Lump Crab and Spinach Au Gratin.

- Cuisine: Fine dining
- Website: http://blueatthetopaz.com
- Address: 1224 South Oceanshore Boulevard Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: Voted Flagler’s Best Fine Dining Restaurant & Best Desserts.

★ BY THE SEA CAFÉ

They’re not lying about the sea-front. If you’ve never had an omelette, iced tea and home fries seasoned with fresh sea salt – clear room in Saturday morning’s schedule. Or Saturday night – breakfast is served all day! If you’re very much into breakfasts, a frequent-eater card awards your 10th breakfast free. Note: Closed Monday and Tuesday.

- Cuisine: Breakfast and burgers (from scratch)
- Address: 1536 S Oceanshore Blvd, Flagler Beach, FL 32164
- Keep in mind: Voted Flagler’s Best Family Restaurant and Best Breakfast

★ FLAGLER FISH COMPANY

You know the seafood is fresh when you choose your lunch or dinner straight from the market case. A small establishment in a bright and cheerful beach bungalow, you can dine in-house, or buy their best to take home and cook or BBQ yourself. You’ll also spot them at the Flagler Farmers’ Market for a weekly breakfast fix. Why not try: Seafood chowder and home-made chips.

- Cuisine: Seafood
- Website: http://www.flaglerfishcompany.com
- Address: 180 South Daytona Avenue Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: Closed Sunday.

★ THE GOLDEN LION

Go on and get local, filling up on cold beer and great ocean views. With Guinness on tap and a daily catch-of-the-day, you can choose between weekend live entertainment (summer months) or assemble some lawn chairs with a great group of friends.
• Cuisine: Pub fare and seafood
• Website: http://www.goldenlioncafe.us
• Address: 500 N Scenic Highway A1A, Flagler Beach, Florida 32136
• Children: Kids’ menu available
• Keep in mind: Voted Flagler’s Best American Restaurant

★ HIGH JACKERS

A lively sports bar and ‘wings/nachos’ restaurant that comes to life on Football Sundays. (Miami Dolphins or bust). Just beside the airport, it pulls off its ‘aviation’ theme and offers live music under the flight path on weekend evenings. (Word to the wise – that’s exactly when parking gets tricky). Why not try: ‘Super’ nachos.

• Cuisine: Pub fare
• Website: http://highjackers.com
• Address: 202 Airport Road Palm Coast, FL 32164
• Children: Very kid-friendly.
• Keep in mind: Voted Flagler’s Best Kids Menu

★ HIGH TIDES AT SNACK JACK’S

Prepare two things for the most casual beach bar and restaurant you’ve ever enjoyed: cash, and a valet state of mind. Stuck in a refreshing beachy time-warp High Tides does not accept credit cards and you’re not parking unless you valet. As popular as Flagler Beach gets - nothing more complicated than the beach, fresh seafood and friendly people. Why not try: Crab & Conch Fritter Combo.

• Cuisine: Beer and oysters
• Website: http://www.snackjacks.com
• Address: 2805 South Oceanshore Boulevard Flagler Beach, FL 32136
• Children: Kids’ menu available
• Keep in mind: Voted Flagler’s Best Outside Dining

★ JOSEPH’S PIZZERIA

While Joseph sticks to Flagler’s ‘early to bed’ schedule, if you can make it to his pizza place before 9 p.m. (eat in or take-out), you’ve got a hearty piece of Sicily headed your way. Home-made secret-family-recipe-sauce? Naturalmente. Save room for: Tiramisu.

• Cuisine: Pizza
• Website: http://www.josephsbistroflagler.com
• Address: 308 South A1A Flagler Beach, FL 32136
• Keep in mind: Closed Mondays. Available for take-out by the slice.

★ OCEANSIDE BEACH GRILL

A family operation with care and attention in all details. Food is prepared fresh in-house, with a Greek salad so good you’ll turn kids towards vegetables for life. Breakfast options are just as tempting as lunch and dinner – plan your vacation days wisely! Why not try: Flaming sausage and fish of the day.

• Cuisine: Greek food and mixed grill
• Website: http://www.oceansideflagler.com
• Address: 1848 South Oceanshore Boulevard Flagler Beach, FL 32136

★ TURTLE SHACK

Back with a sparkle after a total renovation, the Turtle Shack focuses on fresh and friendly. Right on the beach, you might choose their take-out service for a quick picnic.

• Cuisine: Burgers, sandwiches and seafood
• Website: www.facebook.com/turtleshackcafe
• Address: 2123 N Ocean Shore Blvd., Flagler Beach, FL 32136
• Keep in mind: Closed Mondays.

Coffee and breakfast

★ BEACHHOUSE BEANERY

Imagine a coffee shop that puts a smile on your face before the caffeine hits. In every color of the rainbow, this beach cottage will do it. All manner of home-made baked goods and sandwiches are available, as well as fresh espresso. Save room for: Carol’s Key Lime Pie.

• Cuisine: Vegan food, coffee and desserts
• Website: http://www.beachhousebeanery.com
• Address: 1112 S Oceanshore Blvd, Flagler Beach, Flagler, FL 32136
• Children: Kids’ menu available
• Pets: Yes! Outdoor pet-friendly seating section.
• Keep in mind: Hosts “Flagler Beach Vegan Fest”.

★ JAVA JOINT

Another great spot with friendly staff where you can start your day with coffee and ocean views. Stay for a lazy breakfast, and maybe a second cup. Save room for: Kathleen’s crab cake eggs Benedict.

• Cuisine: Coffee, breakfast and lunch
• Website: www.facebook.com/JavaJointBeachside
• Address: 2201 North Oceanshore Boulevard Flagler Beach, FL 32136
• Pets: Yes! Outdoor pet-friendly seating section.
• Keep in mind: Gluten-free options available.

★ MAGGIE’S EUROPEAN BAKERY & CAFÉ

Very little and extremely lovely, Maggie’s is a German bakery that does wonderful things with butter. Indeed, everything is made in-house. A great location opposite the beach suggests you eat one breakfast inside, and take a second to the beach (for brunch?). Romantic dinners are held once or twice a month – check the website for Supper Club details. Save room for: Acai Raspberry Crepe.

• Cuisine: Breakfast, brunch and pastries
• Website: http://www.maggieseuropeancafe.com
• Address: 909 North Oceanshore Boulevard Flagler Beach, FL 32136
• Keep in mind: Reservations recommended for brunch. Closed Monday & Tuesdays.

★ SALLY’S ICE CREAM

• Address: 401 Florida A1A Flagler Beach, FL 32136
• Keep in mind: Voted Flagler’s Best Ice Cream
★ THE WAFFLE CONE (CASH ONLY)

- Website: http://www.thewafflecone.com
- Address: 102 South 4th Street   Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Keep in mind: 100% recommended on Trip Advisor at time of writing!

★ Misc. food

★ PADDLE OUT WATERSPORTS & BEACHSIDE BAKERY

A one-stop beach shop, where a bakery and a water-sports rental combine to make a ‘Beach Concierge’ – anything you need to enjoy yourself on Flagler Beach, all in one place. They’ll even bring you a picnic lunch in a wicker basket. Will you eat before or after your Stand-Up Paddling lesson?

- Website: http://www.facebook.com/POWSports
- Address: 509 N Oceanshore Blvd. A1A, Flagler Beach, FL.

3 cool things to do at night

★ FLAGLER BEACH FIRST FRIDAYS (MONTHLY)

From 6 p.m. through sunset, Flagler Beach hosts a monthly carnival/block party for residents and visitors alike. Live music, great local vendors and themed activities ensure each month is different and shouldn’t be missed. Come hungry and eat your way through Flagler’s best!

- Website: http://www.cityofflaglerbeach.com/firstfridays.html
- Address: Veterans Park, on the corner of A1A & Route 100
- Keep in mind: First Friday of every month, from 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.
★ FULL MOON HIKE (MONTHLY)

Rangers at Gamble Rogers Park welcome any night-owls for a full moon hike, setting off from the beach as the moon begins to rise. Though extremely informative, this hike requires little exertion and is less than a mile long.

- Website: http://www.floridastateparks.org/gamblerogers
- Address: 3100 S. State Road A1A, Flagler Beach, Florida 32136
- Children: Kids welcome. Event finishes at 7:15 p.m.
- Keep in mind: RSVP required. See website for details.

★ FAMILY MOVIE NIGHTS AT WICKLINE PARK (MONTHLY)

Recalling a Happy Days era, enjoy an outdoor movie broadcast on the walls of the old school house. Movies are shown on the last Saturday of the month (March, April, May, June and September, October, November).

- Website: http://www.cityofflaglerbeach.com
- Address: Corner of Central Ave & S 7th Streets, Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Children: Movies are kids’ movies, generally G-rated
- Keep in mind: It’s free! Flashlights are recommended to navigate after the movie.

Palm Coast & Flagler Beach outdoors

Eco-tours & environment

WHALE WATCHING

Here’s a free one, and it’s 10/10 on the ‘communing with nature’ scale. This coast is very lucky to host right whales every winter as they migrate to its warmer waters to give birth and raise their calves. If you keep an eye out, wherever you are along the coast, you might spot some whales – especially the younger ones playing.
• How to spot a right whale?
  Forget Free Willy-style jumps. These are mummy and baby whales so they need to conserve their energy. Instead, look for water spouting in a V-shape.

• Are right whales endangered?
  Yes! And have been listed as such since 1973. Estimates state there are about 450 North Atlantic right whales.

• How big, how heavy?
  Between 45-55 feet long (that’s a ‘Turnpike double’ semi-trailer), and 30-40 tons!

Details
  • When: December through March
  • How close: They can be as close as a quarter of a mile from shore.
  • Rules: Maintain a distance of at least 500 yards from a right whale.
  • Keep in mind: If you see a whale (congrats!), please call to report it: Toll-Free 1-888-979-4253 (1-888-97-WHALE). The number is active from November through May.

BIRD-WATCHING

Quick - name four species of birds. How about forty-seven? As for four hundred seventy? That’s the total number of species verified to have been spotted in Flagler County. 470!!! Even if you’ve never picked up a pair of binoculars, the variety of bird-life here is enough to get your attention. Five of Flagler’s twenty parks are designated stops on the Great Florida
Birding Trail – easy enough to see all five in even a week’s vacation. See the link below for a map-based trip-planner and then charge that camera battery!

- Website: [Great Florida Birding Trail online](#)
- See also: [Florida’s Birding & FotoFest](#) – workshops and tours featuring professional nature photographers, the festival is based at University of Florida Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience.

ECO-TOURS

★ RIPPLE EFFECT ECO-TOURS

We’ve covered the good guys at Ripple Effect previously (see page 65), and from Palm Coast or Flagler Beach, it’s just a twenty-minute drive to Marineland’s Marina. For any angle on nature, there’s a great tour to be had with these guys.

★ HAMMOCK WATER SPORTS (GUIDED ECO-TOURS)

Reasons for: If staying anywhere in or near Ocean Hammock, you won’t get closer to nature more conveniently. If planning a voyage with children who might not pay much attention to the talking part – the educational front might not rate so much. Reasons against? Ripple Effect’s guides have such expertise in this field, all with outstanding qualification and Master Naturalist certification. Perhaps consider it the difference between a very nice outing with a perceptive local, or a PhD Paddle. Both very enjoyable, whether you choose convenience or expertise.

- Website: [Hammock Water Sports Facebook](#)
- Address: 5054 N. Oceanshore Blvd. Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Children: Ages 6 and up
- Keep in mind: A 2/2.5-hour tour
KAYAKING

With mile upon mile of paddling trails across Palm Coast and Flagler County, and dozens of rental shops and public launch sites... what’s your excuse? If your kids are slightly more eager than you, you can supervise in many spots while walking trails alongside. We’ve taken care to note kayaking and canoeing highlights throughout these chapters, though a handful also worth mentioning include:

- Bulow Creek Paddling Trail
- Tomoka River Paddling Trail
- Tomoka State Park
- St. Johns River system
- Website: Florida paddling trails online

★ TROPICAL KAYAK

A great local shop to get you started is Tropical Kayak. They’ll rent you all the gear, and also offer beginner lessons, plus guided tours and eco-tours. In no time at all you’ll be on first-name terms with the Intracoastal and surrounding wetlands.

★ NORTH BEACH SURF ADVENTURES

Part surf camp for grown-ups, part relaxation retreat, this operation has a great range of programs. Whether you’d prefer to kayak, stand-up paddle, or surf (or learn how to do any of the above), there’s a camp, course or tour for you. Rather rent and do your own thing? See their details on page 123 or head straight to their site, below.

- Website: http://northbeachsurfadventures.com
- Address: 2480 N Ocean Shore Blvd., Flagler Beach, FL 32136-2713
- Children: Yes!
- Keep in mind: Couples’ Retreats also offered
Salt and freshwater fishing galore! This part of Florida is an angler’s dream – in fact, before tourism took over, fishing was Flagler’s main industry. To get the fine print out of the way well before your vacation begins, we’ve provided relevant links, details and licensing info below. For bait and tackle rental, please see page 126.

Do you need a fishing license?

Yes – unless going out on a charter with a licensed fishing guide (see following section). If fishing yourself, you’ll need a non-resident license. Fresh and saltwater rates are the same and cover 3- and 7-day periods (before scaling to an annual pass). While you can pick one up at a tackle shop, save yourself some time and order it online: www.wildlifelicense.com or by phone 1-888-347-4356.

• Helpful reading: The Boating & Angling Guide to Flagler & St. Johns County

FISHING CHARTERS

★ PALM COAST FISHING

Captain Chris Herrera invites guests aboard his shallow water skiff, where you’ll cover the Intracoastal waterway and its tributaries.

• Website: http://www.palmcoastfishing.com
• Children: Children welcome
• Keep in mind: Bring your own snacks! Polarized sunglasses recommended.
OSPREY FISHING CHARTERS (LIGHT TACKLE OR FLY FISHING)

Captain Rob offers both beginners and pros the chance to catch snook, redfish, trout, flounder and tarpon – all locally, within Flagler County. The truly lucky might catch a mangrove snapper.

- Website: http://www.flaglerfishingcharters.com
- Address: 46 Bulow Woods Circle, Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Children: Yes! All ages welcome.
- Keep in mind: USCG licensed and insured

CAPTAIN MIKE’S CHARTERS (INSHORE AND OFFSHORE FISHING)

Captain Mike suggests that, with his help, you can “reel in the big one without the tall tales”. From trout to king mackerel and mahi-mahi, your fishing adventure can take shape in one of three boats. Choose between comfort, speed or a minimum water depth of just eleven inches.

- Website: http://www.captainmikescharters.net
- Children: Yes, depending on the boat. Call with inquiries.
- Keep in mind: USCG Certified Captain

SAILING AND BOATING

If you’d rather be on the water than in it, Palm Coast and Flagler Beach have boating possibilities galore. If coming with your own boat, you’ll find a friendly welcome at any of three local marinas. Otherwise, rent a powerboat or a yacht locally, or take a charter (see a greater selection of rentals and charters in the St. Augustine area, page 65). For now, let’s get to know the local waterways:

- Website: Boating the Intracoastal

Marinas

MARINELAND MUNICIPAL MARINA

- Website: http://www.marinelandmarina.com
- Address: 101 Tolstoy Lane, St. Augustine, FL 32080
★ MARINA AT HAMMOCK BEACH RESORT

- Website: Marina at Hammock Beach Resort online
- Address: 200 Ocean Crest Drive, Palm Coast, FL

★ PALM COAST MARINA

- Website: http://palmcoastmarina.net
- Address: 200 Clubhouse Drive, Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Keep in mind: Boat rentals also available from Palm Coast Yachts, on site

Boat Rentals

★ ELECTRIC BOAT RENTALS OF PALM COAST (AT TROPICAL KAYAKS)

While boating experience is required to rent an electric boat, Tropical Kayaks’ range of motor and human-powered craft (including water bikes) suits anyone and everyone wanting water. A great alternative to a powerboat, these electric boats are perfectly quiet on the water (meaning you’ll see more wildlife).

- Website: http://www.kayakcafe.com
- Address: 200 ClubHouse Dr. Palm Coast, Fl. 32136
- Children: Must be over 21
- Keep in mind: Reservations recommended

SURFING

While this coast isn’t known for its diving or snorkeling, it’s an ideal place to try surfing. Kids are especially catered to – and with their lower center of gravity, why not! Of course, you’ll find surf shops offering rentals and lessons along the entire coast, but here are few local to Palm Coast, Ocean Hammock and Flagler Beach.
★ HAMMOCK BEACH SURF LESSONS (HAMMOCK WATER SPORTS)

Great surf lessons for all ages, especially welcoming to beginners. Kids particularly will love the board-cam which will upload their best action shots to Facebook.

- Facebook: Hammock Water Sports
- Website: Surf Station online
- Address: 5054 N. Oceanshore Blvd. Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Children: Ages 5 and up

★ NORTH BEACH SURF ADVENTURES

Giving new meaning to ‘soul surfer’, (less the shark movie connotation), North Beach is very, very keen on surfing as a way of life. Eager to show you how a little board time can rejuvenate a person every which way, they’ve got camps, classes and surf retreats suitable for kids, beginners, couples and more. The salt might be addictive!

- Website: http://www.northbeachsurfadventures.com
- Address: 2480 N Ocean Shore Blvd., Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Children: Most definitely

General recreation

YOGA

★ PADMA YOGA

Keep up with your practice or finally give this yoga nonsense a try. Walk-in rates are available, as are weekly sessions and monthly passes. If you’d prefer, private classes are another option.

- Website: http://www.padmayogaonline.com
- Address: 5 Utility Drive Suite 15, Palm Coast, FL 32136
TENNIS

★ THE PALM COAST TENNIS CENTER

Sign up for a free member registration and gain access to online reservations for public courts – it couldn’t be easier and you’ll never have to give the couple hogging the courts an evil eye. For even more tennis, there are junior and adult clinics and camps. A really world-class facility with great tournament play.

- Website: http://palmcoasttenniscenter.com
- Address: 1290 Belle Terre Parkway, Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Children: Junior programs available

★ BELLE TERRE SWIM & RACQUET

Pay-as-you-go access to four tennis courts, with gym and pool facilities also on-site. If you’re staying awhile and plan to make regularly use of Belle Terre, a membership is very affordable and might make great sense.

- Website: Belle Terre online
- Address: 73 Patricia Drive, Palm Coast, FL 32164

HIKING

‘Hiking’ can be a catch-all term for a “walk in real shoes not flip-flops” or a five-hour slog into the back-country with matches, ponchos and a GPS. Whether one appeals more than the other, this region accommodates all comers. While many of the biking trails stated below double as hiking trails, these PDFs from Palm Coast and Flagler local governments are great resources to download, print out, or put on your phone.

- Palm Coast: Trek It Out (PDF)
- Flagler Beach: Trails maps (PDF)

BIKING/CYCLING

A particular trail favorite runs along the shore from Marineland, past Ocean Hammock and all the way to Flagler Beach. Bet you can’t guess its name...
**FLAGLER BEACH TO MARINELAND TRAIL**

Note: this trail has no signs whatsoever. It’s is as ‘Locals’ Secret’ as it gets. Whether you do it all at once, or take a week exploring a little further each day, it could be an absolute highlight.

- Website: [Trail details online](#)

**Other bike trail links:**

- St. Joe Walkway and Palm Coast Linear Park trail (page 81)
- Palm Coast bike trails: [Trail details online](#)
- See also: Graham Swamp Preserve (page 105)

**GEOCACHING**

With the caveat that you need a GPS receiver, this is a free activity that’ll really get you exploring Palm Coast. Do it with kids as a novel treasure hunt, or with friends (perhaps combined with a pub crawl?).

- Website: [www.palmcoastgov.com/geocache](#)

**HORSE RIDING**

If you’d rather saddle up than sun-tan, Palm Coast and Flagler have miles of equestrian trails between them. For details, please see our notes on Princess Place Preserve (page 103) and the Florida Agricultural Museum (page 78).
Equipment rental

BIKE RENTAL

★ BIG BILL’S BEACH STUFF
• Equipment: beach cruisers and children’s bikes
• Website: www.bigbillsbeachstuff.com
• Address: 5122 Hwy A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Children: Also rent helmets and kiddie karts/child seats
• Keep in mind: delivery available for a fee

★ TROPICAL BIKES, KAYAKS CANOES & BOAT
• Equipment: Bikes (for land), water bikes and helmets
• Website: http://kayakcafe.com
• Address: 200 Clubhouse Dr, Palm Coast, FL
• Keep in mind: Their location puts you directly on the bike trails straight away.

BIKE REPAIR

★ PC BIKE
Not a rental shop, but a great full-service bike place with a huge inventory, willing experts and repair shop. Check their website for details on all the best local trails, as well as an events calendar for organized trail rides (ongoing).
• Equipment: bike sales and repair
• Website: www.pcbike.com

★ BICYCLE DOCTOR
• Services: Bicycle sales, repair and spare parts/accessories
• Website: http://yourbicycledoctor.com
• Address: 2550 N US-1 Unit 3, Bunnell, FL 32110
• Keep in mind: Closed Sunday and Monday.

WATERSPORTS

★ BIG BILL’S BEACH STUFF
• Equipment: boogie boards, flippers and kayaks
• Website: www.bigbillsbeachstuff.com
• Address: 5122 Hwy A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
• Keep in mind: delivery available for a fee

★ HAMMOCK WATER SPORTS
• Equipment: kayaks, boards (surf, SUP, boogie paddle)
• Website: Hammock Water Sports Facebook
• Address: 5054 N. Oceanshore Blvd. Palm Coast, FL 32137
• Children: Kids’ equipment and lessons available
• Keep in mind: Eco tours also available (see page 93).
★ TROPICAL BIKES, KAYAKS CANOES & BOAT
- Equipment: kayaks (single, 2-person and family-size), paddle-boards, electric boats
- Website: http://kayakcafe.com
- Address: 200 Clubhouse Dr, Palm Coast, FL
- Keep in mind: Slightly messy website updates with great wildlife sightings

★ NORTH BEACH SURF ADVENTURES
- Equipment: Board rental of every kind
- Website: http://www.northbeachsurfadventures.com
- Address: 2480 N Ocean Shore Blvd., Flagler Beach, FL 32136
- Children: Kids’ programs and summer camps.
- Keep in mind: Retreats and full range of instruction also available.

FISHING
★ CAPTAIN’S BBQ BAIT & TACKLE
- Equipment: “Everything you need for fishing except gas for the boat.”
- Website: http://captainsbbqbaittackle.com
- Address: 5862 N. Oceanshore Blvd., Palm Coast, FL 32137
- Keep in mind: Road and water access. See page 87 for BBQ details.

★ BIG AL’S BAIT & TACKLE
- Address: 323 N 2nd Street, Flagler Beach

BEACH EQUIPMENT
★ BIG BILL’S BEACH STUFF
- Equipment: wide selection
- Website: www.bigbillsbeachstuff.com
- Address: 5122 Hwy A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
- Keep in mind: delivery available for a fee

MISC. (BABY SUPPLIES, MEDICAL, ETC.)
★ BIG BILL’S BEACH STUFF
- Equipment: wide selection of baby supplies, plus BBQs and roll-away beds
- Website: www.bigbillsbeachstuff.com
- Address: 5122 Hwy A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
- Keep in mind: delivery available for a fee

★ CARTER’S FAMILY RENT-ALL
- Equipment: Party supplies for big occasions (tents, chairs, tables, etc).
- Website: http://www.carterstent.com
- Address: 815 Carswell Ave, Holly Hill, FL

★ PALM COAST MEDICAL EQUIPMENT
- Website: Palm Coast Medical Equipment Facebook
- Address: 381 Palm Coast Parkway SW, Palm Coast, FL 32137

★ HOSPITALITY OXYGEN AND MEDICAL EQUIPMENT
- Website: Hospitality Oxygen and Medical Equipment Facebook
- Address: 4601 E Moody Blvd, Suite K11, Bunnell, FL 32110
Ponte Vedra Beach.
Ponte Vedra Beach

Introduction

It’s been called the best place to live in Florida (Money Magazine, 2005), and if you golf, play tennis or can stand a day or two at the spa – you’ll agree. Ponte Vedra Beach is far from ‘the action’ and that’s how its residents like it – a laid-back, beautiful corner of the coast where a relaxing day starts on the beach, finds time for golf and ends at the spa (or the bar?).

Ponte Vedra’s feel and flavor

Orient yourself starting from the Ponte Vedra Inn and Club and go from there. This is a very quiet and residential beach town; put Daytona Beach in mind and then conjure the exact opposite. PVB recognizes it has a good thing and keeps it quiet – and, to an extent, fairly locked up. Its gorgeous beaches are harder to access than elsewhere along the coast but persistence (to find parking) pays off.

Although busier through snowbird season, this well-to-do enclave remains very welcoming to families – the town’s median age is early 40s and so its restaurants offer a respectable mix of grown-up ambiance and kids menus with high chairs. Ponte Vedra’s only logistical peculiarity is that you’ll require a car – this spread-out town is beautiful but not at all walkable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ponte Vedra Beach to...</th>
<th>25 miles</th>
<th>30 minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Augustine</td>
<td>30 miles</td>
<td>35-45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Coast</td>
<td>50 miles</td>
<td>75 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>130 miles</td>
<td>2 hours 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Using shortest route available, not necessarily the most scenic
History

The 1942 landing of a German U-boat is Ponte Vedra’s dubious claim to fame. Four spies came ashore on PVB, before walking north to Jacksonville Beach and eventually making it to Cincinnati and Chicago. The PVB Chamber paints the whole story of Operation Pastorius – now a strange local quirk in WWII history.

Beach basics

• **What to expect:** As a visitor to Ponte Vedra Beach, gaining access to the beach is a small victory worthy of an ice cream at the very least. Once you’ve arrived and decamped you’ll appreciate why – you’ll have gorgeous stretches of sand to yourself, with none of the tourist trappings found elsewhere.

• **Sand:** Ponte Vedra Beach’s sand has two aspects you’ll like. On top, it’s the soft, white stuff you want. An inch or so underneath, find a layer of crushed shells which (following high tide) are firm enough to walk, run or ride a bike on.

• **Shells and sharks’ teeth:** Those in-the-know insist you look at low tide, far from the parking area. Apparently that’s the sweet spot – especially after a storm! For sharks’ teeth tours, see page 54.

• **Safety:** When swimming in the ocean, always take caution against rip tides. Check the day’s conditions using the helpful links on page 7. Ponte Vedra Beach has a peculiarly steep slope, invisible at high tide, and gets deep very quickly.

How can I find sharks’ teeth?

As in any hunt, you need to know what you’re looking for. Head to the line where the receding water has left other shells and debris. Surprisingly, these fossilized sharks’ teeth are black – and they’re small, shiny and triangular. Don’t be fooled by shards of mussel shells – this is, indeed, a search. If you see other people doing similar, ask if they’ve had any luck – maybe they’ll share their tips. This is a great way to keep kids busy!
BEACH ACCESS AND PARKING

They haven’t made it easy in PVB – but it’s worth the extra effort. This map shows the public rights of way.

★ BEST BEACH SPOT: MICKLER’S LANDING

- **Pronounced:** Mike-ler’s
- **Address:** 1112 Ponte Vedra Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
- **GPS:** 30.161879, -81.357740
- **Getting there:** There’s no sign, so you’ll feel like a local once you hit the public parking just off Ponte Vedra Blvd. and head down the wooden boardwalk (visible on Google Maps’ Satellite view if you have trouble).
- **Parking:** Free
- **Sunset:** Get a little romantic, this is an absolute favorite spot for a well-timed beach walk.
- **Facilities:** Simple but clean bathrooms and outdoor showers. The wooden walkway is wheelchair accessible.

What to see and do (sights & attractions)

Golf

WATCHING GOLF: THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP AT SAWGRASS

In a happy case of right place/right time, the PGA sought a home for its Tournament Players Championship while the Sawgrass development was underway. Ensuring their selection, developers offered 400 acres to the PGA for $1 - a steal even forty years ago. Ten years later, The PLAYERS Championship took up residence in its new home at the Stadium Course. Golf fans won’t find a course better designed with them in mind.

If you’re visiting Ponte Vedra in May, you might be lucky to snag tickets to the golf event in Florida. However, at all other times of year it’s possible to visit TPC Sawgrass and say “I’ve
seen the green”. As a golf fan, standing on the 17th hole of this course is akin to seeing Big Ben or the Eiffel Tower – it’s a must when is this part of the world.

- **How to get tickets:** See details on the [PGA tour website](http://www.pgatour.com) – and be sure to plan ahead!

- **Where to park:** If you’re a lucky ticket holder for this tournament, we have a few parking tips. Expect high volumes of traffic from Thursday through Sunday of the tournament weekend. A park-and-ride shuttle option is available on Palm Valley Road (it is well-signed coming south from Sawgrass on the A1A).

### Why is The PLAYERS Championship so famous?

Why is The PLAYERS Championship so famous?

With the highest value prizes of any tournament, you can expect to see the top 50 golfers in the world play a course designed to give fans the best views.

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**PLAYING GOLF**

★ **TPC SAWGRASS (THE PLAYERS STADIUM COURSE AND DYE’S VALLEY COURSE)**

Whether you want to play a full round or would rather take a tour, TPC Sawgrass keeps their year-round operation focused on the fans and is extremely welcoming to all ages and skill levels. No matter when you come, you’ll find the clubhouse open with restaurant choices and a large pro shop for all manner of golfing souvenirs.

- **Dining:** See Ponte Vedra restaurants, page 138, for more detail
- **Website:** [http://www.tpc.com/tpc-sawgrass](http://www.tpc.com/tpc-sawgrass)
- **Address:** 110 Championship Way, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
- **Layout:** 7,215 yards, par 72 (Players Stadium Course)
- **Layout:** 6,864 yards, par 72 (Dye’s Valley Course)

★ **TOUR ACADEMY AT TPC SAWGRASS (GOLF SCHOOLS AND LESSONS)**

Whether you’re a beginner with little time, or an accomplished golfer with children in tow – TPC Sawgrass has a class in TOUR Academy for you. They offer 2-5 day Golf Schools – including daily golf, private lessons and junior camps. Book early and get excited!

- **Website:** [TPC Sawgrass TOUR Academy online](http://www.tpc.com/tpc-sawgrass)
- **Children:** Junior programs available for ages 7-17
SAWGRASS COUNTRY CLUB (PRIVATE)

Previously home to The Players Championship, Golf Digest rates this club and its three distinct courses (9 holes each) very highly. The club is private but is well recommended by other visitors who have managed an invitation.

- Features: Lots of water
- Website: http://www.sawgrasscountryclub.com
- Address: 10034 Golf Club Drive, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

My husband loves golf... I don’t. What can I do all day?

Hopefully this guidebook offers a few ideas for all interests. Assuming that you’re sharing a car, you could easily spend an enjoyable day in Ponte Vedra Beach, or drive 30-45 minutes to Jacksonville or St. Augustine and enjoy a day to yourself (spa, window-shopping or even a women-only kayak eco tour or surf camp). You’ve got dozens of options to have a great time, far from golf.

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BIRD ISLAND PARK

An easily accessibly stop on the Great Florida Birding Trail, with two walking trails as well as a boardwalk around the park’s pond. Spend a while observing this example of Northeast Florida’s ecosystem – benches keep you comfortable, while information signs on local wildlife, as well as a cellphone audio tour, mean there’s plenty to get out of a visit. The park is especially rewarding during migration, when its rookery reaches maximum occupancy.

- Website: http://www.birdislandpark.com
- Address: 101 Library Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
- Getting here: Next to the Ponte Vedra Beach Library
- Cell phone audio tour: http://www.scenica1a.org/recreation.html
- Great Florida Birding Trail: http://www.floridabirdingtrail.com
- Children: Children’s play area and storytelling arena.
- Printable coloring page: PDF download
Shopping

★ SAWGRASS VILLAGE:

A convenient group of shops and restaurants near TPC Sawgrass. A much-improved take on the strip mall, it’s laid out in a village format and occasionally hosts art and classic car festivals. Many of our recommended Ponte Vedra restaurants are here.

- Website: http://www.sawgrassvillagepvb.com
- Address: 1100 Sawgrass Village Drive, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

MISCELLANEOUS SHOPPING

- **General beach supplies:** About 3 blocks of shops selling or renting assorted ‘beach things’ on the scenic A1A.

- **Boutiques:** If you prefer independent boutiques or can never get enough window-shopping, head to Ponte Vedra’s center, where home décor and small gift shops line the scenic A1A. Try Mineral City and the *Pineapple Post*, among many others.

- **See also** – St. Johns Town Center (Jacksonville day trips for details, page 162).

Spas

★ PONTE VEDRA INN AND CLUB SPA

Make the good life last – spend a full day with your spouse or girlfriends, choosing from a complete range of treatments, as well as lunch and time by the pool (in a fluffy white robe, no less). A few ideas include manicure/pedicures, a sleek new haircut and a full spa massage menu available in any...
of their 22 treatment rooms. Once your massage is underway, you’ll likely fall asleep to the sound of water bubbling nearby.

- Website: http://www.pvspa.com
- Address: 200 Ponte Vedra Boulevard, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

★ THE SPA AT SAWGRASS (SAWGRASS MARRIOTT)

Taking design cues from the Far East, the spa at Sawgrass Marriott stands in 15 acres – you’re far removed from daily stressors before you’ve even begun. Nineteen treatment rooms accommodate a full menu of options, including hydrotherapy and couples’ massage. Ever had a soothie? Try this spa staple beside the pool, as you wait for your pedicure to dry.

- Website: http://www.sawgrassmarriott.com/spa
- Address: 1000 PGA Tour Boulevard, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
- Keep in mind: Day passes for the fitness center, and yoga/Pilates classes also available

Enjoying Ponte Vedra outdoors

Nature, water sports & outdoor recreation

Guana River Reserve

The reserve in entirety comprises a massive 73,352 acres of wetlands from the coast going inland, with St. Augustine in the middle. Within this, a 2,000-acre sanctuary (the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve, or GTM) is a must-visit for all ages and interests. Whether for an educational day, an eco-adventure or simply a day of relaxing on a completely unspoiled beach – the GRR has options to last weeks and more. Outdoorsy highlights include hiking, fishing, four miles of protected, natural beach, and canoeing on
Guana Lake (on the other side of the A1A from the beach). Trails span over ten miles, while beach-goers and boaters have four access points and two boat ramps to choose from. Cap the day off with a picnic!

3 facts about the GTM:

- The GTM is as far north as you’ll see mangroves on this coast of the U.S.
- Sand dunes at the GTM measure up to 40 feet high - amongst Florida’s tallest.
- The right whale (an endangered species) visits here each year to give birth.

★ ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

Learn about the unique ecosystem of this part of Florida in a learning center that’s part museum, part aquarium and will capture any number of interests. Exhibits present the area’s natural history, while aquariums showcase just what’s swimming out there in the ocean and estuaries. Also, get the chance to watch marine scientists at work in their labs.

- Website: www.gtmnerr.org/index.html
- Address: 505 Guana River Road, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
- Children: Check the website for kids’ programs and to adopt a sea turtle nest
- Pets: Prohibited on the beach, allowed on-leash elsewhere in the park
- Keep in mind: Open daily except on state holidays

Other places of interest

WITH KIDS OR TEENS

★ SHOPPING – ST. JOHNS TOWN CENTER

See page 162 for details on this upscale, outdoor mall – ideal for keeping teenage girls happy and adequately accessorized.
★ BOOGIE BOARDING

An easier (and cheaper) intro to the world of water-sports, buy a boogie board at any local beach shop (or Publix) & your kids’ vacation is sorted. (Or see equipment rental details on page 143). You might want to grab one for yourself – it’s fun!

★ BEDTIME READING ABOUT OLD-TIME PONTE VEDRA

If traveling with younger children, this is a great book to tuck away for vacation bedtime stories. *Once Upon a Summertime* by Marion "Muffet" Cowart recounts a young girl’s experience growing up in 1930s Ponte Vedra - a very different place back then, with far more cows! Cowart recommends this book for "beach children of all ages". Buy your copy on Amazon in advance of your trip.

MISCELLANEOUS

★ MAYO CLINIC

Medical treatment and research facility with over 40 specialties.

- Website: http://www.mayoclinic.org
- Address: 4500 San Pablo Road, Jacksonville, FL

★ WINSTON Y

This YMCA fitness center and swimming pool welcomes anyone with a YMCA membership from elsewhere.
Where to eat and drink

Though known as this coast’s most upscale beach, Ponte Vedra has some great family options – even at TPC Sawgrass. By the end of your first day, you’ll have a new favorite. However, if picky eaters in your group prefer to eat what they know – all the trusted chains can be found as well. So, are you celebrating or just plain hungry?

Breakfast

★ ELIZABETH’S CAFE

A great little local’s secret serving decadent breakfasts: pancakes, waffles and eggs/ sausage/bacon. Very near the Sawgrass Marriott – try it before a round of golf. Why not try: home-fries.

• Cuisine: Breakfast
Lunch & dinner

★ PALM VALLEY FISH CAMP

Fish is the order of the day, with take-out options available if you'd rather take a picnic (advised if you don’t make advanced reservations). A popular spot in a tight space - plan to enjoy a busy and bustling environment. Valet parking and a nice Intracoastal location to wait outside for your table. Save room for: sweet and salty chocolate torte.

- Cuisine: Seafood
- Website: http://www.palmvalleyfishcamp.com
- Address: 299 Roscoe Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: Opens late on Mondays for dinner only

★ RESTAURANT MEDURE

A personal favorite of Vacation Rental Pros! An upscale room for a special occasion – anniversaries, birthdays and any romantic occasion. However, if you want a taste of something special on any old Tuesday, try a lounge seat or a bar stool, ordering a selection of appetizers. Expect service in keeping with a refined menu, you’ll want to iron to your beach clothes before dining here. Save room for: vanilla bean crème brûlée.

- Cuisine: French and Italian flavors, fine cuisine
- Website: http://restaurantmedure.us
- Address: 818 A.1.A North, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
- Keep in mind: Themed happy hours, including ladies’ nights - see website for details.

★ AQUA GRILL

An institution, with a menu for every taste, and daily specials to keep you coming back. Aqua Grill has frequently made Jacksonville Magazine’s list of "Top 25 Restaurants" - an accolade shared by the voting public on sites such as TripAdvisor and UrbanSpoon.
Best of all? Every dish promises to be free of artificial ingredients! Why not try: Parmesan Truffle Fries.

- Cuisine: Seafood
- Website: http://www.aquagrill.net
- Address: 950 Sawgrass Village Dr, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: Sunday-Funday events through the summer feature live music on a lakefront outdoor deck.

★ PACIFIC FUSION

Sneak fresh and healthy into your vacation, with some sake on the side. Presentation will stop you mid-sentence - try the lava roll or crazy dynamite roll and you’ll see (bring a camera). Save room for: mango sticky rice.

- Cuisine: Sushi and Thai
- Website: http://www.pacificfusionjax.com
- Address: 2 Fairfield Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: Open for dinner only on Sundays, take out available

★ BARBARA JEAN’S

Arrive early and feel mighty smug in the knowledge that dozens wish they had your table. An Intracoastal location perfect for outdoor feasting on home-style southern cooking. Work up an appetite on the beach, then try Barbara Jean’s chicken-fried steak. Bread is baked fresh daily, and the sand parking lot lets you know that a casual brunch, lunch or dinner awaits. Save room for: Chocolate "Stuff".

- Cuisine: Seafood and home-style cooking
- Website: http://www.barbarajeans.com/pontevedradir.html
- Address: 15 South Roscoe Blvd., Ponte Vedra, FL 32082
- Children: Kids’ menu available
- Keep in mind: For dinner, arrive by 5:30 or wait awhile. Weekend breakfast available.
★ RUTH CHRIS’S STEAKHOUSE

A quality experience with a formula you know and trust. Readers of Florida Monthly voted this location their Best Steakhouse. Happy hour menu also available. Save room for: Caramelized Banana Cream Pie.

- Cuisine: Steak
- Website: Ruth Chris’s Ponte Vedra Beach online
- Address: 814 A1A North, Suite 103, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

★ TABLE 1

Fresh, seasonal pizza toppings baked in the stone-hearth oven. Enjoy wine specials on Wednesdays. Don’t miss: live music most nights.

- Cuisine: Pizza and casual dining
- Website: http://www.table-1.com
- Address: 330 A1A North, Suite 208, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

★ DINING AT TPC SAWGRASS

Two restaurants at TPC Sawgrass welcome members of the public. Nineteen offers a daily happy hour, as well as Sunday brunches and suppers, plus casual breakfast, lunch and dinner. A large verandah overlooks both the 9th and 18th holes. For a fancy lunch, try Traditions. What to try while you wait: sawgrass splash cocktail.

- Cuisine: American and Continental/fine-dining
- Website: http://www.tpc.com/sawgrass-dining
- Address: 110 Championship Way, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

★ CABANA CLUB AT SAWGRASS MARRIOTT (‘619 OCEAN VIEW’)

Hard to go wrong with an ocean-front burger and beer – and the Cabana Club gets it right every time. Easy parking makes this a great stop any afternoon. Why not try: the daily kettle creation.

- Cuisine: Seafood and burgers
- Website: http://www.sawgrassmarriott.com/beach/dining
- Address: 619 Ponte Vedra Boulevard Ponte Vedra, FL 32082
- Children: Very family friendly
- Keep in mind: Closed Mondays
Drinks & snacks

★ PUSSER’S RESTAURANT

While the food won’t change your life, Pusser’s offers $5 lunches on weekdays in a lively, Caribbean environment. Very near the Marriott at Sawgrass, it’s a great meet-up spot for cocktails after a day of golf or spa treatments. Ideal with a group for happy hour outside. Why not try: Pusser’s Painkiller rum cocktail.

• Cuisine: Caribbean
• Website: Pusser’s Restaurant online
• Address: 816 Highway A1A North Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
• Keep in mind: Live reggae outside on Sundays through the summer, plus Sunday brunch.

Ponte Vedra Beach with pets

Unless signs state otherwise, pets are welcome on Ponte Vedra beaches, as long as they have a collar with ID tags and remain on a leash. As always, remember the heat; carry water for your dog and never leave him in a parked car. You might find these spots useful while in the area:

★ PAWS DOG PARK AT DAVIS PARK

A fenced dog park with a pond for deserved cooling off.

• Website: Davis Park online
• Address: 210 Davis Park Road, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
★ PONTE VEDRA ANIMAL HOSPITAL

- Website: http://pontevedraanimalhospital.com
- Address: 28 Corona Road, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

★ DOG TOWN USA (BOARDING, DAY CARE, GROOMING)

- Website: http://dogtownresorts.com
- Address: 6988 U.S. 1 St. Augustine, FL 32095
- Keep in mind: Pick-up/drop-off service available in Sawgrass

★ HOUNDS HAIR

- Website: http://houndshair.com
- Address: 935 Florida A1A, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
- Keep in mind: Closed Sunday and Monday

Equipment rental

Two rental outfitters offer delivery to Ponte Vedra Beach (details below). For a wider range of watersports rentals and charter options, please see sections on St. Augustine (page 65) and Jacksonville (page 161).

★ BIG BILL’S BEACH STUFF

- Equipment: bikes, boogie boards, kayaks, wide selection of beach equipment
- Website: http://www.bigbillsbeachstuff.com
- Address: 5122 Hwy A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080
- Children: Also rent helmets and kiddie karts/child seats
- Keep in mind: delivery available for a fee

★ RENT BEACH STUFF

- Equipment: bikes, kayaks, chairs, umbrellas, boards, snorkel gear... and metal detectors
- Website: http://www.rentbeachstuff.com
- Children: Also rent jogging strollers, kiddie karts/child seats
- Keep in mind: delivery available for a fee
Day trip ideas (Jacksonville, Disney & more)
Day-trips & attractions

Tips for planning & visiting

HOW TO PLAN YOUR DAY-TRIP IN ADVANCE

Tickets
Florida’s theme parks and attractions are amongst the best in the world – with many visitors making yearly trips. If planning just a day or two at Disney, a little research can both save on ticket prices and mean ‘less queuing, more doing’. Seemingly dozens of ticket packages exist for every attraction that follows – if the choice overwhelms at first, simply hop on to a theme park forum or Trip Advisor for advice – someone in-the-know will gladly steer you right. “Doing Disney” is an expert’s field, many of whom happily share their insight. If you’d rather skip the research, note that in almost all cases you can save a little by buying your tickets online.

Special events (and rocket launches)
When to go? If you do nothing else prior to your day-trip, do check the online event calendar at any attractions of interest. You’d be mighty disappointed to arrive at the Space Center to find out that a rocket launched yesterday, right? A well-timed special event could become a trip highlight and a lifelong memory. (But don’t blame us if your kids start nagging about Space Camp...).
Getting the most out of a large theme park
Show up to ‘the happiest place on Earth’ – and then what? “Mom, Mom, Mom!” “Can we do this, and that, and go there?!?” Nobody’s promising a relaxing day – but it should be supreme good fun. Whether you tend towards O.C.D., color-coded schedules, or something a bit more spontaneous, it’s good to have a few stops in mind. If you can check off every family member’s top choice in the morning, the afternoon is open for exploration. So, peruse the map today! Who wants to go where?

Safety, and happy kids
Many rides have height restrictions. Better to break the news to your shorty in advance than suffer a meltdown at the ride’s entrance. (More details online). As for crowd safety, talk through a plan that suits your kids’ ages.

What to bring with you
Three top tips! Snacks, like granola bars or bananas, can save the day if you find yourself starving in a long line. (Same goes for bottled water). If it’s hot, many parks sell cooling spray bottles – but you’ll find them cheaper at any local drug store. Plastic ponchos and waterproof disposable cameras are also nice to have at water parks.

Resource websites and special requirements
• Getting deals on theme park tickets: http://www.themeparkinsider.com/tickets
• Good overview of Disney parks: http://allears.net/tp/themeparks.htm
• Strollers and wheelchair rentals are available at the attractions that follow. For pet daycare details, we’ve listed info per applicable park.
Kennedy Space Center

A fascinating day well-suited to both adults and children, you’ll get the most from your visit if you plan it in advance. Definitely allow a full day – to give you an idea of scale, the Space Center sits alone on an island six times the size of Manhattan. (So you’ll appreciate the shuttle buses as much as the shuttle launches). A great variety of exhibits appeal to all interests, from space, to history, to technology, however the center is huge and it’s easy to miss something good. A printable day-planner feature lets you plan a full- or half-day visit, adding in special requirements as necessary. Don’t miss: the Space Shuttle launch simulator.

Planning your visit:

- Website: www.ksc.nasa.gov
- Day-planner: http://kennedyspacecenterplanner.com
- Address: Kennedy Space Center, FL, 32899
- Ticket tips: Tremendous range of ticket packages and pricing. Spend some time on the website to choose the best option for you.
- Twitter: KSC is active on Twitter and offers occasional discounts.
- Save: Check for online special offers, including ongoing deals for online booking & military discounts.
- Spend: KSC has a great variety of optional add-ons, but you’ll need to plan them in advance. ‘Lunch With An Astronaut’ is a pricey (but tasty) option for the serious space or history buff. If your kids tune out at normal dinner parties, this might appeal more to just the grown-ups.
- Children: Have they seen Apollo 13? A great way to ignite their interest in space. You’re advised to “BYO-entertainment” for kids under 5. There is a playground but its appeal might not last an entire day.

On the day:

- What to see: For some time out of the sun, catch an IMAX® movie narrated by Tom Hanks
- What to skip: The Orbit Café.
- Pets: Free air-conditioned kennels are available.
- Keep in mind: Parking, strollers and wheelchairs are complimentary. Note that many of the exhibits are outside, so bring water and a good hat!
Disney World

Disney fans agree: if you’ve only got one day – head to the Magic Kingdom. With a second day, choose between Epcot or Animal Kingdom. Have three? Cool off at a water park.

Planning your visit:
• Website: disneyworld.disney.go.com/plan
• FASTPASS: If you can’t abide waiting in lines, you might like the ‘FASTPASS’ ticket option.

On the day:
• Pets: Disney offers pet day-care and over-night boarding at Best Friends Pet Care Center. Prices depend on length of stay, type of pet, and optional extras. Be sure to bring your vaccination records.

★ MAGIC KINGDOM PARK

THE Disney experience you’ve known your whole life, whether or not you’ve ever been in person. You and your kids will both delight in the chance to meet Mickey – and spin round and round in teacups. If you haven’t been since your own childhood, the rides have grown up too! Don’t miss: Wishes Fireworks at 9 p.m. daily.

• Website: http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/magic-kingdom

★ DISNEY’S ANIMAL KINGDOM PARK

More or less a Disney-fied zoo, this park offers the world’s flora and fauna and will appeal to those short on time who need a diverting, mildly educational dose of wildlife (over 1,000 animals!). Kids particularly will like spotting their favorite Disney characters amongst the exhibits and related entertainment. Those with a preference for more ‘natural’ nature should skip this park in favor of other Disney offerings (and see pages 152 and 159 for local wildlife day-trips). Don’t miss: Nemo - The Musical.

• Website: http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/animal-kingdom
• Address: 551 Rain Forest Road Lake Buena Vista, Florida 32830
• Spend: The ‘Wild Africa Trek’ offers participants a commemorative photo CD and water bottle, to recall a day of ‘rickety bridges’, ‘safari vehicles’ and time on the
savannah. This might be the closest your kids have come to stepping into The Lion King.

- Children: More than others, this park is particularly geared towards children.

★ EPCOT

Thrill-seekers look elsewhere. Epcot’s offerings toe the ‘education exploration’ line more than any other Disney park. Critics suggest that Epcot feels out-dated these days, and fails to captivate younger children or worldly adults. However, two annual festivals (Epcot International Food & Wine Festival and Epcot International Flower & Garden Festival) draw large crowds – will they catch your interest? Don’t miss: ‘Soarin’™’.

- Website: http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks(epcot
- Address: Epcot Center Parking Rd., Orlando, FL 32830

★ DISNEY’S HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS (FORMERLY MGM STUDIOS)

Both site of and shrine to Disney’s movie and TV empire, a day here puts young and older inside beloved movie experiences. Kids will love the Toy Story ride, while teens and adults should check out the Tower of Terror and the Aerosmith experience. Don’t miss: Fantasmic, a fire and water show playing on select nights.

- Website: http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/hollywood-studios

Universal

★ UNIVERSAL STUDIOS FLORIDA

Your very favorite movies are brought to life in rides (fast and slow), theater-style presentations, and playground experiences. Don’t miss: Hollywood Rip Ride Rockit and Revenge of the Mummy.

- Website: Universal Studios Florida online
- Address: 1000 Universal Studios Plaza Orlando, FL 32819
- Pets: Day kennels are available for a fee, first-come first-served.
★ ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE

Every generation is covered here; whether your first hero was Harry Potter, Spider Man or the Incredible Hulk, there’s a thrill ride or experience for you. Kids will enjoy Seuss Landing particularly and everyone can agree on the magic of Jurassic Park (“no expense spared”). Don’t miss: Butter Beer on sale in the The Wizarding World of Harry Potter.

Planning your visit:

• Website: Islands of Adventure online
• Ticket tips: Download Universal’s app to check wait times for specific rides
• Children: Harry Potter is here.
• Pets: Day kennels are available for a fee, first-come first-served.

Sea World

★ SEA WORLD AND DISCOVERY COVE

These are two separate parks under the Sea World flag. The main Sea World offers an ‘edutainment’ aquarium experience, with dolphin and orca shows, and a handful of rides. Smaller and less-known Discovery Cove puts you in the water, whether you want to swim with dolphins or float down the lazy river. Don’t miss: getting soaked by Shamu.

Planning your visit:

• Website: http://seaworldparks.com/en/seaworld-orlando
• Website: http://www.discoverycove.com
Water parks

★ BLIZZARD BEACH AND TYPHOON LAGOON (DISNEY)

Would you rather spend a snowy day at the beach, or hours meandering the lazy tubing river? Disney’s two water-parks offer a choice you’ve never before had to contemplate. Families with young children are advised to arrive later in the afternoon and stay until the park closes – this helps both to avoid the sun and larger crowds. Don’t miss: Summit Plummet and the massive wave pool.

• Keep in mind: Pathways and sidewalks get very hot! Pack flip-flops or water shoes. The latter are permitted on rides.

Blizzard Beach:
• Website: http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/blizzard-beach
• Address: 1534 East Buena Vista Drive  Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830

Typhoon Lagoon:
• Website: http://disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/typhoon-lagoon
• Address: Lake Buena Vista, FL, 32830

★ WET 'N WILD

If you want the speed of Universal, but don’t want to miss a day away from the water, consider this a “best of both” water theme park. Multi-person rides keep everyone together, while smaller children can spend hours at Florida’s biggest splash park. Don’t miss: Disco h20.

Planning your visit:
• Website: http://www.wetnwildorlando.com
• Address: 6200 International Dr  Orlando, Florida 32819
• Pets: No pet facilities on site.

★ AQUATICA BY SEAWORLD

Three million gallons of water to three million pounds of sand. This park has elements of high-speed theme park, water park, aquatic zoo and a day at the beach. Those keen on plants will love the attention spent on landscaping – 2,500 different tree species are planted throughout. (And you thought Florida just had palm trees). Don’t miss: Commerson’s Dolphins Slides and Eight Lane Racer.
Planning your visit:

- Website: http://www.aquaticabyseaworld.com
- Address: 5800 Water Play Way, Orlando, FL
- Keep in mind: Locker rentals are not included in the price of admission.

Scenic drive

A1A Scenic Highway

As St. Augustine approaches a major milestone anniversary (450 years!), the Scenic A1A highway is an incredible way to travel the coast and see glimpses of what life was like – at any point in that vast span of history. Many points along the route show off untouched local landscape, while other stops tell the stories of native, Spanish, French, Colonial, Civil War, Industrial, Victorian and even Space Age eras. It’s quite the tale to fit into 72 miles!

- How long does it take? Zoom either north or south in about an hour and a half, or explore the route slowly – a little each day.
- Website: http://www.scenica1a.org
- Cell phone audio tour: download tour (mp3s)
- In a luxury convertible: http://www.eliteautoshares.com (high-end car rentals)

Beaches and beach towns

Amelia Island

Ninety minutes’ drive north of St. Augustine, Amelia Island lets visitors time-travel to the Victorian era – free from tourist kitsch. Come for a day’s window shopping, earnest historic appreciation or even time on the water, starting from the small beach town of Fernandina Beach. With a past just as fascinating as St. Augustine, and an annual shrimp festival (each May), it’s a perfect place to let a day surprise you.
Beach and town

Once a port town through which slaves and liquor were transported, Fernandina Beach is today a quaint neighborhood of wonderfully preserved Victorian homes. Many house small cafés, used book shops and antiques dealers – you could easily spend a full day getting to know this quirky little town (and trying out its many ice cream and fudge offerings). As for the beach, it’s designated car-free and spans twelve miles.

- Beach horseback rides: www.kellyranchinc.net
- Mile-long fishing pier: www.floridastateparks.org/georgecradybridge

Where to start

To explore Amelia Island, you can happily wander the area with a map on a tour of your own invention. Otherwise the tour offerings are as comprehensive as in St. Augustine. Known as the ‘Isle of Eight Flags’ (for having flown, yes, eight different rulers’ flags in its past), Amelia Island is small but packed with good stories.

- Carriage tours: http://ameliahorsecarriages.com
- Segway tours: Amelia's Wheels - 904-277-5120
- Ghost tours: http://www.ameliaislandghosttours.com
- Amelia Island Trolleys: http://www.ameliaislandtrolleys.com
- Bike rental: www.pipelinesurfshop.com (Ask the route to Egan’s Creek Greenway).

A day’s dose of history

While many Amelia Island buildings recall Victorian life, the island’s record stretches way back – to the indigenous Timucuan people. (That’s 4,000 years ago, if you’re counting). Three local historic highlights would make a great ‘day in the past’:

- Amelia Island Museum of History: http://ameliamuseum.org
- Fort Clinch State Park: http://www.floridastateparks.org/fortclinch
- Kingsley Plantation: Kingsley Plantation online

Art, galleries and monthly walks

Life by the sea inspires great watercolor, and Fernandina Beach is particularly rich in local talent. Browse a great variety of studios dotted throughout town, choosing a great memento or thoughtful present for family at home.
• Gallery listing: [online listing](#)
• Monthly gallery walks: [art walks event calendar](#)
• Blue Door Artists: [http://www.bluedoorartists.com](http://www.bluedoorartists.com)

Window and antiques shopping
If you can deposit those less interested in shopping at a neighborhood pub, fishing pier or at the beach – this town stands ready to delight. Antiques, boutiques and more! A few suggestions to get you started:

- Trailer Park Collectibles*: [http://www.trailerparkcollectibles.com](http://www.trailerparkcollectibles.com)
- Fern Lily: [http://fernjlily.com](http://fernjlily.com)
- Twisted Sisters*: [Twisted Sisters Facebook](#)
- * denotes pet-friendly

If you like the water
How to make best use of time on an island? Hit the water. This historic port knows a thing or two about fishing – and shrimp, especially. Charters and kayak tours lengthen the list of possibility.

- Amelia River Cruises: [http://www.ameliarivercruises.com](http://www.ameliarivercruises.com)
- Misti Lynn fishing charters: [Misti Lynn online](#)
- The Anglers Mark fishing charters: [http://theanglersmark.com](http://theanglersmark.com)
- Kayak Amelia: [http://www.kayakamelia.com](http://www.kayakamelia.com)

Where to eat
With a few exceptions, most restaurants with outdoor patios are pet-friendly. We’ve marked those advertised as such with an asterisk. A tip to the wise, mosquito repellent if recommended if you plan to eat outdoors in the evening.

- Tasty’s Fresh Burgers & Fries: [www.tastysamelia.com](http://www.tastysamelia.com)
- Gourmet Gourmet: [www.facebook.com/GGFood](http://www.facebook.com/GGFood)
- 29 South: [http://www.29southrestaurant.com](http://www.29southrestaurant.com)
- Barbara Jean’s: [http://barbarajeans.com](http://barbarajeans.com)
- Café Karibo*: [http://www.cafekaribo.com](http://www.cafekaribo.com)
- Kelley’s Courtyard*: [http://kelleyscourtyardcafe.com](http://kelleyscourtyardcafe.com)
Atlantic Beach

Just under an hour’s drive north of St. Augustine, this beach town will suit water rats and shopaholics alike. A particularly genius day-trip if you have two interest groups to entertain (that is, Shoppers Vs. Non Shoppers) – the town center has a great book shop and casual restaurant choices, plus there’s a nice sandy beach.

Beach and access

Fourteen public access points dot two miles of white beach - just the way you like it. Free street parking is nominally available, though empty spots are hard to find - especially on weekends. (Paid parking is located between 18th and 19th Streets).

- Beach access: [map (PDF)]

Shopping

A nice selection of independent shops feature gifts, home goods, clothes for kids, teens and adults, and more, all at the town center. A few favorites:

- Shore Things Gifts: [http://www.shorethingsgifts.com]
- Jaffis’ Boutique: [http://jaffisneptunebeach.com]
- Bali Cargo Company: [Bali Cargo Company online]
- Capri Beach and Beauty: [http://www.capribeachandbeauty.com]
- Bookmark: [http://www.bookmarkbeach.com]

Where to eat:

- Culhane’s Irish Pub: [Culhane’s online](http://www.culhanesonline.com) (featured on Diners, Drive-Ins & Dives)
- Azurea at One Ocean: [One Ocean online](http://www.oneoceanonline.com)
- Ocean 60 Restaurant & Wine Bar: [http://www.ocean60.com](http://www.ocean60.com)
Ormond Beach

A great seaside stop if you’re driving down the scenic A1A, Ormond Beach has a surprisingly substantial history. A favored winter spot of the rich and famous from the 1900s onwards, it drew the attention of one John D. Rockefeller who built his residence ‘The Casements’ here. Today the house is open for tours and also exhibits Boy Scouts memorabilia.

The Beach

Though close to Daytona, the atmosphere is night and day. Ormond Beach has long stretches of undeveloped shore, and the sand is too soft to allow cars. While parking can be hard to find, its relative scarcity does deter crowds (more beach for you!).

Local Attractions - the top 3

• The Casements: http://www.thecasements.net

• Ormond Memorial Art Museum (+ 4-acre gardens): Ormond Museum online

• Tomoka State Park: http://www.floridastateparks.org/tomoka
  • Kayak and canoe rentals, plus fishing equipment
  • Spot manatees and dolphins, plus great bird-watching and fishing
  • Live Music Friday and Saturday (“Dani the Ukulele Lady”)
Great for girls’ trips

- Angelic Gardens (day spa): http://dayspawellness.com

Great for kids

- Ormond Beach splash park: details online
- Magic Forest Playground: details online
- Pirate's Cove Adventure Golf: http://www.piratesislandgolf.com

Restaurants

- Bone Fish Grill: http://www.bonefishgrill.com
- Stonewood Grill: (steak) http://www.stonewoodgrill.com
- Fancy Sushi: http://www.fancysushiusa.com
- Alfies Restaurant: (burger diner) http://www.alfiesrestaurant.com
- Betty’s A1A Cafe: (beach-side) http://www.bettysa1acafe.com

Daytona Beach

It must be said, Daytona is a “love it or hate it” town. What’s to love? NASCAR and Bike Week, with a beach for driving and plenty of themed nightlife to fully get your fix. Not your scene? No problem, our other day trip suggestions suit plenty of interests beyond racing – keep reading!

The beach

Daytona claims to be Florida’s most famous beach. Whether it trumps Miami’s fame, it has undoubted niche popularity. Nature-lovers and privacy-seekers, steer clear: Daytona’s bustle spans about 20 miles, with cars permitted on eleven of them. As you may have seen in photos, the beach is incredibly wide - approx. 500 feet - at low tide. Neither access nor parking are a problem (unless you’re a sea turtle?).
Racing

★ DAYTONA INTERNATIONAL SPEEDWAY
The home of NASCAR and its main event, the Daytona 500, as well as major bike events. Tour packages include special events (like Halloween), plus VIP and All-Access options.

• Website: Daytona International Speedway Tours online
• Address: 1801 West International Speedway Blvd, Daytona Beach, FL 32114
• Spend: ‘Richard Petty Driving Experience’, offered on select dates
• Children: Free ID wristbands available at guest services.

★ BIKE WEEK AND BIKE TOBERFEST
Weeklong bike events (the largest in the world) take over Daytona in March and October of each year. Not your interest? Wrong time to visit!

• Website: http://www.officialbikeweek.com

Other Daytona attractions
If coming with kids and you need an afternoon activity after your Speedway tour, two options will help you sneak in a little education:

• Museum of Arts and Science: http://www.moas.org
• Marine Science Center: http://www.marinesciencecenter.com

Where to eat
Every major chain is found in Daytona, with favorites including Carrabbas and Chipolte. For an independent touch, try one of the following:

• Don Vito's Italian Restaurant (made-from-scratch): Don Vito’s online
• The Cellar (closed Monday): http://www.thecellarrestaurant.com
• Dancing Avocado Kitchen (vegetarian): Dancing Avocado Facebook
• The Cracked Egg Diner (breakfast/brunch): The Cracked Egg online
Nature, parks & outdoors

Blue Spring State Park

If you’re crazy about wildlife, or want a ‘Sea World’ experience without the price of admission – Blue Spring State Park is a real treasure. The winter home of a large manatee population, you might also be lucky enough to see Florida scrub-jays, gopher tortoises, or even an alligator or a black bear. Your experience at Blue Spring will depend on the time of year – in winter, November 15 through March 1, it’s all about manatees and all water sports are prohibited. In the summer months, you’re welcome to swim or snorkel in the warm waters of the natural springs. What else is there do? More than enough for a day’s visit:

- Website: http://www.floridastateparks.org/bluespring
- St. Johns River Cruises and Tours: http://www.sjrivercruises.com
- Water sports (in season): SCUBA, snorkel, swim, tubing kayak and canoe (rentals available)
- Pets: Leashed pets welcome. State Parks pet policy online

Ocala National Forest

Choose-your-own-adventure: want another scenic drive, or are you raring to get outside and see some real nature (that is, very likely out of cell phone range). The huge Ocala National
Forest spans 300,000 acres and offers plenty of quiet space for post-Disney decompression. Whether you drive through it and see where you end up, or head somewhere specific, do try to spot one of Florida’s 2,000 black bears.

- Park brochure: Ocala National Forest (PDF)
- Trails map: Maps (PDF)

**What do do**

- Scenic drive: Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway online
- Canoe rentals (see below)
- Horses - Cactus Jack's Trail Rides: http://www.cactusjackstrailrides.com

**Recreation sites and outdoors activities**

Each recreation site offers rental equipment for the activities available (e.g. canoeing, kayaking). Larger ones also have guided tours, including glass-bottom boat tours and eco tours.

- Website: http://www.fs.usda.gov/recmain/ocala/recreation
- Biking: http://pwbt.weebly.com
- Hiking: http://www.floridahikes.com/ocala-national-forest

**Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve**

A huge area covering all manner of parks (city parks, state parks, national parks) and other points of interest, Timucuan is the umbrella reference point for a great variety of destinations. The wildlife and ecology changes tremendously across 46,000 acres – from estuary to deep forest. What do you want to see?

- Website: http://www.nps.gov/foca/index.htm

**If you like history**

- Fort Caroline National Memorial: http://www.nps.gov/foca/index.htm
- Kingsley Plantation: Kingsley Plantation Online
Outdoor recreation

- **Little Talbot Island State Park**
  - Hiking, bike trails, bird-watching (194 species)
  - Bike rental available
  - Website: [Little Talbot Island State Park online](#)

- **Big Talbot Island**
  - Guided kayak tours: [Kayak Amelia online](#) (sunset, full-moon & tai chi tours)
  - BEAKS (Bird Emergency Aid and Kare Sanctuary): [BEAKS Facebook](#)

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**City day-breaks**

**Jacksonville**

Florida’s largest city, however you measure it, Jacksonville (‘JAX’ to locals) is a big city with small town, southern charm. Both a university campus and a corporate center, we’ve outlined a dozen or so reasons to make a day trip ‘into town’. While the greater tourist lures are further south in Orlando, time in JAX shows you just how varied ‘real life’ in Florida can be.

**WHAT TO SEE & DO**

**General attractions: the top 3**

Any of the following will make an easy and enjoyable day trip all by themselves, especially if combined with any of our restaurant suggestions (page 163), or as the end point to a scenic drive up A1A (page 152).

- Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens: [http://www.jacksonvillezoo.org](http://www.jacksonvillezoo.org)
- Jacksonville Arboretum: [http://www.jacksonvillearboretum.org](http://www.jacksonvillearboretum.org)
• Jacksonville Football (NFL team - Jaguars): http://www.jaguars.com

Jacksonville with children
Should you and your children need a day out of the sun, JAX has some great kids’ museums and child-friendly exhibits, for ages 18 months and up. Three favorites:

• Art Connections (at the Cummer Museum of Art): Art Connections online
• Art Explorium Loft (at the Museum of Contemporary Art): Loft online
• Hands on Children’s Museum: http://handsonchildrensmuseumjax.com

Like beer? 2X Brewery tours and tap rooms.

• Anheuser-Busch Brewery: Budweiser Tours online
• Bold City Brewery: http://www.boldcitybrewery.com/home.php

Like boats, fishing and the water?

• Kayak eco tours: Maybe you’re kayaked-out by this point, but two tours on offer are particularly local and unlike any city tour you’ve yet seen. Choose between:
  • Downtown Jacksonville Historic Paddle: First Coast Outfitters online
  • Jacksonville Zoo Kayak Tour: (website as above).

See also –

• Jacksonville Maritime Museum: details online
• Greater Jacksonville Kingfish Tournament: details online

Like art?

• Cummer Museum of Art: http://www.cummer.org
• Museum of Contemporary Art: http://www.mocajacksonville.org
• First Wednesday ArtWalk: ArtWalk online

Like to shop?

★ ST. JOHNS TOWN CENTER

100 shops in 200 acres! An upscale, outdoor pedestrian mall close to Jacksonville – this is a style of shopping done best in sunny climates. Still shiny and new since its 2005 completion, you’ll find all the higher end national chains (Apple, West Elm, Kate Spade, Sephora, Williams-Sonoma and 95 or so other favorites), plus day spas, ice cream shops and great restaurants. Planning ahead for 2014? Guys... Nordstrom is
coming. Whether browsing or re-stocking your entire wardrobe, St. Johns Town Center is shopping perfected.

- Website: St John’s Town Center online
- Address: 4711 River City Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32246
- Where to eat: The selection of restaurants and snack stops at St. Johns Town Center is particularly good, making it a dinner destination in itself. A new Brio Tuscan Grille joins a well-established list: Seasons 52, PF Changs, California Pizza Kitchen, The Cheesecake Factory, Capital Grill and more (Leave room for frozen yoghurt).

See also –

- Riverside Arts Market: http://www.riversideartsmarket.com
- Avonlea Antique Mall: http://www.avonleamall.com
- Jacksonville Landing: http://www.jacksonvillelanding.com (Costco, Target and Wine Warehouse are also nearby).

Bringing a dog?

- Southside Animal Clinic: http://southsideanimalclinic.com
- San Marco Animal Hospital: (904) 399-5557

Where to eat in Jacksonville

- Suite (fine dining): http://suitejacksonville.com
- Wasabi Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi Bar: Wasabi online
- Whisky River (pizza & wings): http://thewhiskyriver.com/jacksonville
- 13 Gypsies (tapas): http://www.13gypsies.com
- Biscotti’s (dessert): http://www.biscottis.net
- Metro Diner (breakfast/brunch/lunch): http://metrodiner.com
- The French Pantry (French): 6301 Powers Avenue, Jacksonville, FL
- Restaurant Orsay (fine dining): http://www.restaurantorsay.com

JACKSONVILLE BEACH

Use a stop in Jax Beach as a reason to try out one of many great restaurants, with fresh seafood a delicious winner. If you’d like to spend a relaxed day in a beach town, consider visiting Flagler Beach, St. Augustine Beach or Fernandina Beach (details on pages 100, 59 and 152). We think these have a better ambiance and more to offer, but restaurants are definitely worth a visit (unless you’re a surfer, in which case check out the Jax surf report).
Where to eat

Hungry? Any of the following make a great night out.

- Taco Lu: (tex mex) http://tacolu.com
- Bonefish Grill: (seafood) http://www.bonefishgrill.com
- Carrabbas Italian Grill: 9 3rd Street North, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250
- Salt Life: (seafood) http://www.saltlifefoodshack.com
- Tama’s Sushi: Tama’s Facebook
- 11 South: (fine dining) http://www.elevensouth.com
- Brix: http://brixtaphouse.com
- The Ritz Bar: (cocktails) http://theritzlounge.com
- The Atlantic: (night club) http://www.facebook.com/atlanticjax

Gainesville

Three reasons to consider leaving the beach and making the 70- or 80-mile drive to Gainesville? For the sports fans or college-bound, there’s the University of Florida. Are you a dog-owning gardener? Try the pet-friendly Kanapaha Botanical Gardens. And, a good enough reason to go anywhere, toast Tom Petty’s home city at Swamp Head Brewery.

- Website: http://www.visitgainesville.com

Gainesville attractions (top 4)

- Florida Museum of Natural History (and Butterfly Rainforest)
  - Website: http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu

- University of Florida
  - College sports - Gators: www.gatorzone.com
  - Campus tours: http://www.admissions.ufl.edu/visit.html
  - Bat House: http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/bats
  - Harn Museum of Art: http://www.harn.ufl.edu


- Swamp Head Brewery (tour & tasting): Swamp Head online
Bringing a dog?

- Dogwood Park & Daycare: http://www.dogwoodpark.com
- UF Veterinary Hospitals: http://hospitals.vetmed.ufl.edu

Where to eat

- The Top (vegetarian): 30 North Main Street  Gainesville, FL 32601
- 101 Downtown (fusion): http://101gainesville.com
- Civilization (local ingredients): http://www.welcometocivilization.com
- The Jones Eastside (breakfast): http://thejoneseastside.com
- Manuel's Vintage Room (Italian): http://manuelsvintageroom.com
Hungry?

10 favorite spots to eat and drink in northeast Florida

1. Café Alcazar (p. 41)
2. High Tides - Snack Jacks (p. 112)
3. Captain’s BBQ (p. 127)
4. Collage (p. 39)
5. Java Joint (p. 114)
6. Restaurant Medure (p. 139)
7. Casa Maya (p. 41)
8. Flagler Fish Company (p. 111)
9. The Hyppo (p. 42)
10. Back 40 Urban Café (p. 41)