



## VISIT MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST

### NATURE-TOURISM AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

**Estuarine Education and Leadership Development Center** – 228.497.7778, Gautier, MS 39553

Increase your awareness the natural places of the Mississippi Gulf Coast at this new center with interpretive walks on the nature trails, informal classes on estuaries and wetlands in the educational greenhouse, and boat tours along the backwaters of coastal Mississippi. (\*River and Marsh Tours for larger groups, the Estuarine Center will partner with Eco-Tours of South MS and McCoy's River Tours). Team building and group problem solving on the Low Ropes Course. For more of a challenge, experience the High Ropes course, kayak/canoe/SUP instructions. Catering available.

**\*Eco-Tours of South Mississippi** - 228.297.TOUR(8687), Gautier City Park - Mary Walker Bayou [ecotours.ms@gmail.com](mailto:ecotours.ms@gmail.com) Contact: Kathy or Jeff Wilkinson. (\*max 20 passengers)

Interpretive tours introduce you to the natural habitats of the cypress swamps and salt marshes of the lower Pascagoula River or the coastal barrier islands. The Pascagoula River, the longest (by volume) unimpeded river in the lower 48 states, flows 80 miles from its confluence to the Gulf of Mexico. Alligators and migratory birds--pelicans, ospreys, herons, egrets, and even bald eagles--are abundant. Three hundred species of native plants including wild lilies and orchids enhance the beauty of the swamp.

**\*McCoy's River and Marsh Tours** – 228.588.0356, 5107 Arthur Street, Moss Point. Provides eco-tours of the Pascagoula River Basin. Contact: Captain Lynn or Benny McCoy (\*max. 20 passengers). Let Captains Lynn or Benny McCoy take you on the Pascagoula River, one of the most pristine river swamps in America and the last waterway of its size in the United States which is unimpeded by any artificial structure. Over 74,000 acres of it is a permanently protected wildlife area. Tour on a 24-foot custom built; Coast Guard certified and approved tour boat, which holds up to 20 passengers and offers small nature tours of this unique river and marsh system.

**[Gulf Islands National Seashore](#)** – 228.875.9057, 3500 Park Rd, Ocean Springs. Davis Bayou area.

Congress set aside a few of the barrier islands as Gulf Islands National Seashore for recreation and preservation of natural and historical resources. Recreational activities such as camping, fishing, boating, swimming, walking, hiking and biking abound here. The park stretches from Cat Island in the Mississippi Sound 160 miles east to the Okaloosa area on Santa Rosa Island in Florida.

The Davis Bayou headquarters area of the park in Ocean Springs features the William M. Colmer Visitor Center, nature film, interactive exhibits, boat launching, trails, pier, picnicking, and pavilions. Seasonal passenger ferry service takes visitors from the Gulfport Small Craft Harbor to day use beaches on West Ship Island. Primitive camping is available on Cat, East Ship, Horn, and Petit Bois Islands. The Visitors Center is open daily from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

[Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge](#) - 228.497.6322, 7200 Crane Ln, Gautier.

This refuge is one of national wildlife refuges administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It was established in 1975 to safeguard the critically endangered Mississippi Sandhill Crane and its unique disappearing habitat. The refuge consists of more than 19,000 acres in four units and is now part of the Gulf Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Visitor's Center: Tuesday - Saturday, 9am - 3pm.

A three-quarter mile nature trail adjacent to the Visitor Center winds its way through pine savanna, tidal marsh, and pine scrub. Plant life is abundant along the trail, especially in spring when carnivorous plants and orchids are in bloom. The alert visitor can also see and hear signs of wildlife. Wading birds visit the bayou, and many songbirds, including the eastern bluebird and Bachman's sparrow, frequent the savannas. Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge is an excellent place to come and observe wildlife.

## Coastal Heritage:

**Biloxi Lighthouse** - 800.245.6943. The Biloxi Lighthouse, erected in 1848 and one of the first cast-iron lighthouses in the South, is the city's signature landmark and has become a post-Katrina symbol of the city's resolve and resilience. Open for public tours Monday through Saturday at 9 am.

**Biloxi Visitors Center** at the Lighthouse - 800.245.6943, opened on August 8, 2011. The center houses a free 5,000 square foot multi-media museum dedicated to the history of Biloxi and the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Audio-sticks are also available. The second floor has a sixty-seven seat theater that regularly shows a 10-minute video titled "We are Biloxi." Both floors of the beachfront facility include abundant rental space for special events, meetings etc. Open 7 days a week. Hours: Mon-Sat, 8am - 5pm, Sundays, 10am - 4pm.

**Biloxi Schooners** - 228.435.6320. Biloxi Schooner Pier, across from the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art Campus. [www.maritimemuseum.org](http://www.maritimemuseum.org) Contact: Robin Krohn-David, Executive Director.

The Maritime & Seafood Industry Museum has recaptured a piece of history in their two famous schooners, the "Glenn L. Swetman" and the "Mike Sekul". For a truly unique way of enjoying the Mississippi Gulf Coast step on board an authentic replica of a Biloxi oyster schooner. These "White Winged Queens" once sailed the Coast from the late 1800's to the early 1900's.

Enjoy a beautiful sail from the Schooner Pier Complex along the Biloxi Beachfront and see Biloxi's coastline and islands as you have never seen them before or just gaze into

the sunset and watch for dolphins. Boarding is at the new Schooner Pier in Biloxi which is located south of Highway 90 just West of Harrah's Casino Complex and East of Kuhn Street.

**Biloxi Shrimping Trip**– 228.392.8645. Biloxi Small Craft Harbor, Call for tour schedule, walk-ons welcome. [www.biloxishrimpingtrip.com](http://www.biloxishrimpingtrip.com) Contact: Brandy Moore. The Biloxi Shrimping Tour celebrates over 50 years of the Sail Fish operating as a tourist attraction. The pride and heritage of Biloxi comes alive aboard this unique and interesting cruise. Upon leaving the harbor, the shrimping net is set out with full details of how and what makes the net operate correctly. Expect to catch a variety ranging from shrimp, blue crabs, flounder, stingray, oysterfish, squid, pufferfish and numerous other species of local marine life. The entire catch will be identified and presented for your inspection by the captain. This 70 minute living marine adventure cruise is navigated in the calm protected waters between Deer Island and the Biloxi shoreline for your comfort.

**Maritime & Seafood Industry Museum** - 228.435.6320. Exhibits include Native Americans/Colonial period, Boatbuilding, Tools of the Trade, Shrimping, Oystering, Crabbing, Marine Blacksmithing, Wetlands, Barrier islands, Biloxi Seafood Factory, Historic Boats of Biloxi, Managing Marine Resources, and Nets including Turtle Excluder Devices. We will also have a hurricane exhibit discussing the anatomy of a hurricane, development stages, tracking and a theatre showcasing the films on Hurricane's Camille and Katrina.

**Ship Island Excursions** – 228.864.1014, 866.466.7386, Gulfport Small Craft Harbor. [www.msshipisland.com](http://www.msshipisland.com) Contact: Captain Louis Skrmetta  
Relaxation, recreation and history - these are the gifts offered to you on Ship Island. Here in the north central Gulf of Mexico, about 11 miles off the Mississippi Coast, are some of the last undeveloped barrier islands in America. Part of Gulf Islands National Seashore and protected by the U.S. Park Service, these exquisite sand islands offer visitors the first high quality beaches for swimming and shelling east of New Orleans.

Travel to a special place where the main attractions are outstanding beaches, beautiful water and clean gulf air. Locals and visitors consistently rate the 22-mile round trip to Ship Island as the coast's premier waterborne experience. Watch for dolphins. Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphins are frequently seen playing in the wake of our boats, or feeding on mullet and menhaden near the island beaches. Visit historic **Fort Massachusetts** (circa 1868) on your own, or on a Park Ranger guided tour offered after the passenger ferries arrive at the island. Seasonal schedule runs from April-October and departs from the Gulfport Yacht Harbor located at Highway 49 & Highway 90 intersection. Call for departure times.

### **Paddling, Tubing and Sailing:**

**Wolf River Canoe/Natural Adventures Touring Kayaks** – 228.452.7666, 21640 Tucker Rd, Long Beach. [www.wolfrivercanoes.com](http://www.wolfrivercanoes.com) Contact: Joe Feil (can accommodate large groups)  
Famous for its white sand beaches and winding waterways, the Wolf River is the perfect playground for the amateur or experienced canoeist and kayaker alike. Lessons, guided trips, camping, tubing, sea kayaking adventures are available for individuals and groups.

Just minutes from the gulf beaches, the cool waters of the Wolf River flow over adventurous clay formations, twist around pristine white sand beaches, and meander through peaceful woodlands. Whether you want to swim, picnic, camp, tube, or just relax and enjoy nature, a canoe trip from Wolf River Canoes has a trip for you. By encouraging visitors to be environmentally concerned, helping found the Wolf River Conservation Society, sponsoring river cleanups, and participating in the Adopt-A-Stream Program, *I hope to see the river remain pristine for generations to come. I feel that "river-time" is a great way to bring people and nature together, combine fun and fitness, and to recharge in the midst of hectic lives* – Joe Feil.

**Paddles Up and WutSUP** – Standup paddle board rentals and tours. 850.687.3023 or 228.669.1802

### Trekking:

**Tuxachanie Hiking Trail**, 601.528.6160, USDA Forest Service - Red Creek Wildlife Management Area

Saucier, MS 39574. (This activity requires moderate agility and stamina. Narrow foot bridges may be slippery and some uneven pathways)

Jump into your sneakers and take a walk on the Tuxachanie Trail in the DeSoto National Forest. The trailhead begins at Highway 49 in north Gulfport. The first five miles of the trail follow an old abandoned railroad, which once served the saw mill of the Dantzler Lumber Company. As you hike, you will encounter a variety of environments, from savannahs to swamps with an abundance of pitcher plants and palmettos. This trail is 22 miles long roundtrip. If you plan on walking the entire trail, bring along your water bottles. If you don't want to travel the whole route, there is a 5.5 mile pick-up point at Airey Lake.

**Possum Walk Trail**, 228-467-9048, Trailhead begins at INFINITY Science Center, exit 2 off I-10. This 3.1 mile trail crosses through pristine marsh and wetland areas, is great for birding and wildlife viewing, biking, pedestrian walks and have interpretive exhibits throughout, including information about the history of the area. This segment of trail is located in the first area settled by Europeans in 1699. Logtown was known for its tremendous resources of pine and hardwood forests, and at one time, was home to the largest sawmill in the world. The fully accessible trail highlights the heritage and ecology of the area, with interpretive signage for children and adults, a scavenger hunt, and a new bridge over the Bayou Bogue Homa, near a settlement of freed slaves who worked in the mills and forests. Graphics will provide information on common birds, the Pearl River watershed, the native tribes of Acolapissa and Choctaw, pine plantations, the lost community of Logtown, and the community of Possum Walk.

### Walk-On Fishing:

**Deer Island Fishing & Tours**, 228.875.3825, 228.806.8671, Ocean Springs Harbor, Ocean Springs, MS 39564 Contact: Captain Mark Compton (Maximum 25 passengers). A 30-foot pontoon boat named "Ms. Biggy," offering 3 hour fishing trips departing twice daily. Captain Compton has over 35 years fishing experience. For the fisherman the "Ms Biggy" offers light tackle fishing within sight of the coastline. Many reefs and wrecks produce a large variety of fish to include white trout, ground mullet, red fish, speckled trout and flounder. You never know what you might hook. All tackle, bait and fishing licenses provided. Departure Times: 8am & 1pm Daily.

**Biloxi Shrimping Trip** - 228.257.8357, Biloxi Small Boat Harbor, Biloxi  
Enjoy 3 hours aboard the Sailfish. (Minimum 10 passengers to set sail).  
You will experience light tackle fishing with an experienced Captain and Crew. We will take you to the local favorite fishing spot "the rock piles" located directly south of Biloxi Small Craft Harbor. Once anchored up we will help you set your lines so the fun can begin. You will be targeting such species as white trout, ground mullet and flounder. This trip is great for a first time fisherman, children or anyone who does not want to be out in the hot sun all day.  
All trips depart from the Biloxi Small Craft Harbor at exactly 6:30am and arrive back at Biloxi Small Craft Harbor at exactly 9:30am. Please arrive at the Biloxi Small Craft Harbor by 6:15am to board the boat.