

# VISIT PANAMA CITY BEACH

FALL 2017 MAGAZINE

## Peerless VIEWS

**NATURE'S BEAUTY BECKONS ALL  
TO STAY FOR ONE MORE DAY**

**FALL  
FISHING**  
The bite  
is right

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**SHELL  
ISLAND**  
Pristine  
paradise

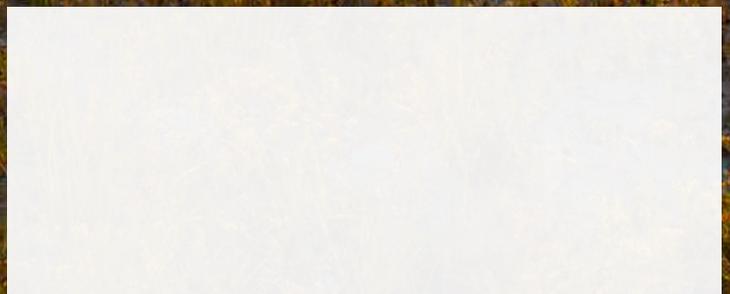


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**AS A BUSY SUMMER** comes to a close, we welcome what many “in the know” call their favorite time in Panama City Beach — autumn. There is no such time as “off season” here as we have become a year-round destination, and starting Labor Day into the holiday season the amazing events keep on coming. A variety of music and local seafood festivals, holiday celebrations and parades highlight the calendar this time of year. At the same time, we always have beautiful weather in Panama City Beach, and there is no shortage of sunny days mixed with warm waters during autumn. So as you flip through these pages, I encourage you to have your calendar handy and plan to attend a fall festival or stroll on the sand in Panama City Beach. I know I will.



In this issue of Visit Panama City Beach, you will find some new places and spaces to explore in PCB (pg. 50), how to take camping to the next level (pg. 46), tips on fall fishing from a local expert (pg. 86) and where to go to root on your favorite sports teams this football season (pg. 74).

That’s not all you will uncover in the pages of this visitors guide. Take a peek through the issue and discover more going on in Panama City Beach; from golfing and shopping to ecological wonder, there are opportunities all along the 27 miles of white sand and emerald waters waiting for you to explore.

However you decide to spend your fall season in Panama City Beach, we invite you to “Make It Yours.” From ecotourism and romance to family beach time and adrenaline, the options are endless to create your own vacation vibe here at our Real. Fun. Beach.

**Dan Rowe, President and CEO**

*Visit Panama City Beach*

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[WATCH LIVE](#)



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# Panama City Beach

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- “Back Beach Road” ..... Panama City Beach Parkway
- “Middle Beach Road” ..... Hutchison Boulevard
- “City Pier” ..... Russell-Fields Pier
- “County Pier” ..... M.B. Miller Pier

\*\*NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

Major Road

Bike Path



## Distance Chart

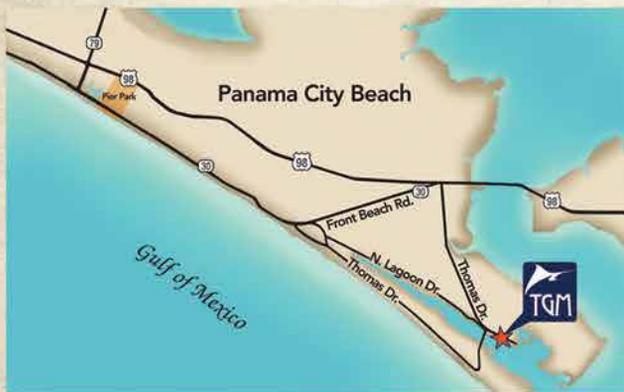
Atlanta, GA	297 mi	470 km
Birmingham, AL	280 mi	440 km
Dallas, TX	751 mi	1,310 km
Houston, TX	639 mi	1,034 km
Montgomery, AL	186 mi	206 km
Nashville, TN	476 mi	744 km
New Orleans, LA	305 mi	513 km
Orlando, FL	340 mi	617 km
St. Louis, MO	745 mi	1,243 km
Tallahassee, FL	98 mi	171 km
Tampa, FL	339 mi	546 km



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# Natural Treasures

By land and by sea, animals enrich the Gulf of Mexico experience

BY STEVE BORNHOFT  
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN RUSSO

**DESERTS CAN BE** made to bloom. Just add water. Doubt that? Consider, then, the sands of Panama City Beach, its surf line and the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico extending to the horizon.

Those environments attract and host myriad life forms, a mere small sample of which is represented in the drawing before you. Some, at the bottom of food chains, are so small as to go unseen; others are too big to be reeled in.

To be sure, all add to the experience of visiting the beach. It is possible to enjoy each on a surface level, but you may also be inclined to go granular — see what we did there? — and seek answers to the questions they invite: How do sand dollars eat? Of what advantage to snowy egrets are yellow feet? All groupers mature first as females! What's that all about?

And, hey, we haven't even gotten around to marine mammals, including that bottlenose leaper who elicits oohs and aahs whenever it takes to the air.



Laughing Gull



Great Blue Heron



Sandpiper

Flounder



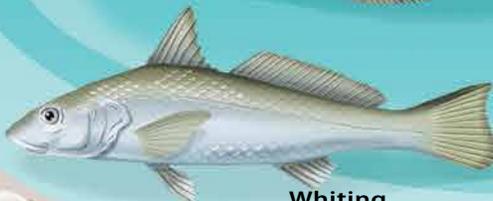
Speckled Sea Trout



Redfish



Whiting



Fighting Conch



Callico Scallop



Coquina Shells

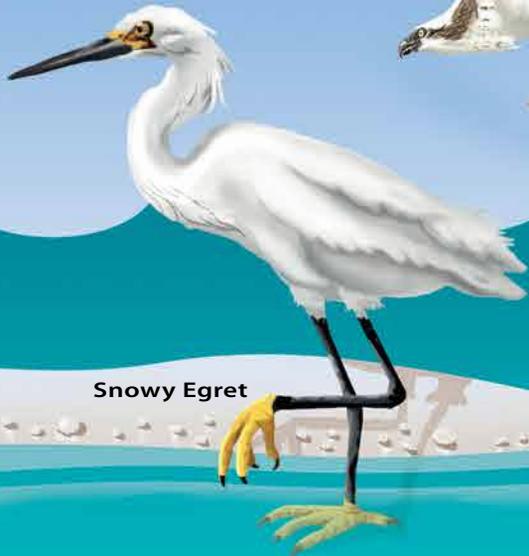
**Osprey**



**Brown Pelican**



**Snowy Egret**



**Mahi Mahi**



**Pompano**



**Red Snapper**



**Grouper**



**Common Nutmeg**



**Florida Augers**



**Olive Shell**



**Alphabet Cone**



**Sand Dollar**





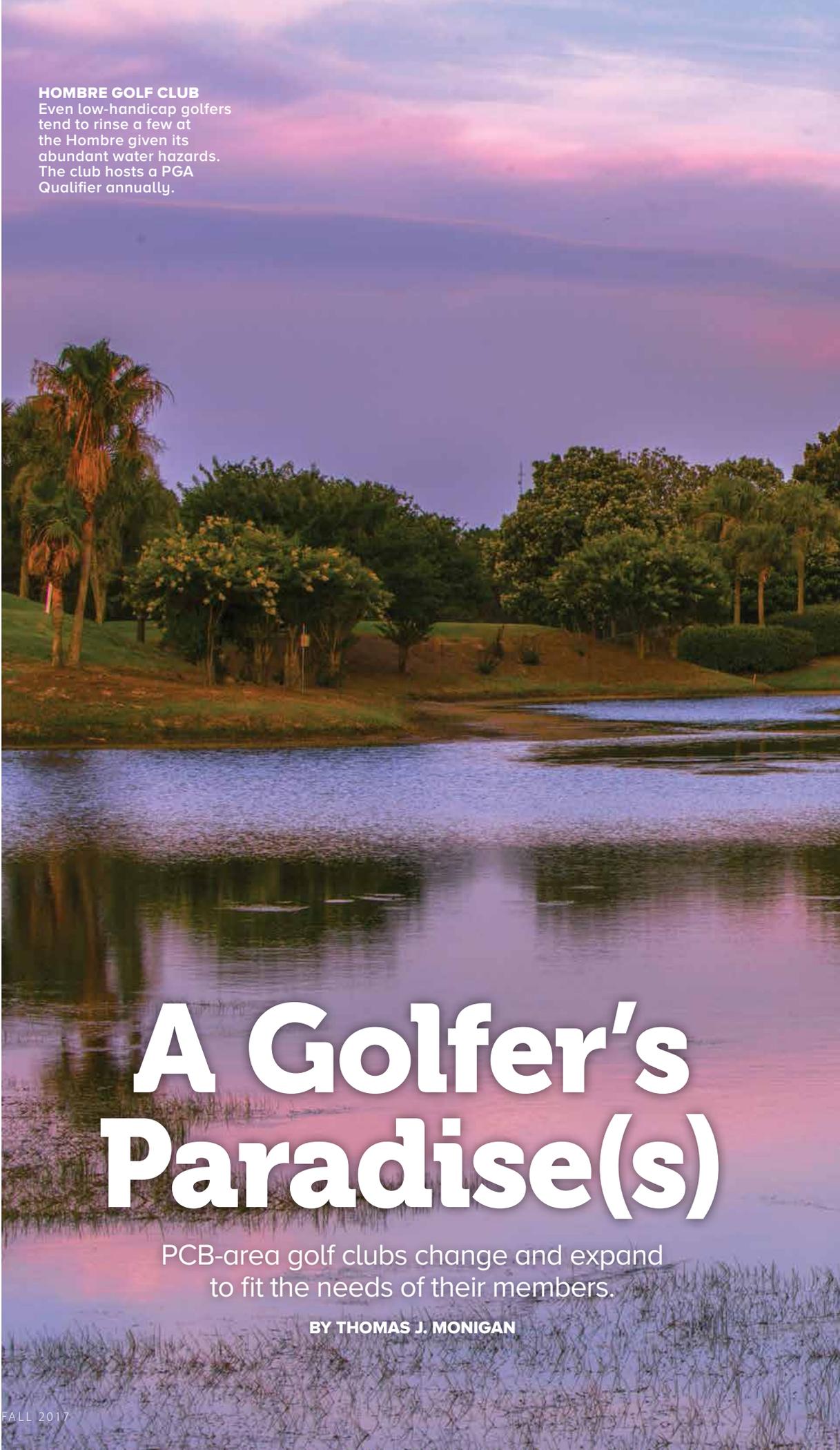
## Golfers' Paradise

### FOR THE SERIOUS

**GOLFER** — or the lucky beginner — there could be no Panama City Beach souvenir more precious than a hole-in-one. Courses here offer easy-to-reach par 3s that make such an achievement possible. There are plenty of holes that will tempt you to take your driver out of the bag. And hey, if your sand wedge is a little rusty, there's no better way to sharpen your sand play than to practice at the beach before hitting the links.

Panama City Beach's eight-course golf menu includes: **BAY POINT**, offering two layouts, the only Nicklaus Design course in the region and a more subtle Walter Byrd layout; **HOLIDAY GOLF**, home to both a regulation 18-hole layout and a lighted par-3 executive course; **HOMBRE**, with three courses, each of which provides a distinctive challenge and lots of water; **SIGNAL HILL**, which delivers a varied 18 holes, open on the front side but dicier on the back.

**HOMBRE GOLF CLUB**  
Even low-handicap golfers tend to rinse a few at the Hombre given its abundant water hazards. The club hosts a PGA Qualifier annually.



# A Golfer's Paradise(s)

PCB-area golf clubs change and expand to fit the needs of their members.

BY THOMAS J. MONIGAN

ROMONA ROBBINS



**AUTUMN ON THE EMERALD COAST** means bright, cool mornings and sunny afternoons no longer tormented by maximum humidity — reason enough to head to the local golf club for a day of driving and putting! The following area golf clubs have changed over the years, and for some, more changes are on the horizon, but there's no doubt that each club will continue to present the very best in amenities.



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PANAMA CITY BEACH



HOMBRE GOLF CLUB

### HOMBRE GOLF CLUB

The Hombre opened with 18 holes in December 1989 and quickly established some impressive PGA connections, which allowed them to host The Panama City Beach Classic in 1990. Since then, they have strengthened their association with the PGA by providing an annual PGA Qualifying School.

“There aren’t many opportunities for the public to play where the pros play,” said Robby Willis, the club’s general manager and director of golf. Willis added that in the past three years, 18 new greens have been installed, and there was a “complete renovation” of the clubhouse.

Earlier this year, the course established a partnership with Callaway Golf and introduced the Hombre Performance Center, with Hank Castleberry as its director.

“We’re going to do lessons, custom fittings — the whole nine yards,” Castleberry said in a springtime interview.

Since 2001, Hombre’s addition of a third set of nine holes gave it 27, total — making it unique in Bay County. Those 27 holes were divided into nines with

the titles “The Good,” “The Bad” and “The Ugly.”

Last year, St. Joe Company bought Holes 1 and 2 of “The Bad” course with plans to develop that land into commercial property. Reconfiguration is scheduled for this fall, with local PGA pro Jerry Pate providing the design. The par will change from 36 to 34 for those nine holes, and from 72 to 70, overall.

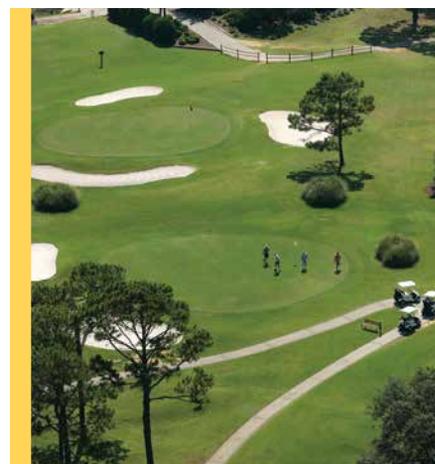
“It’s going to change the personality of the course, but it will not soften the personality one bit,” Willis said.

Meanwhile, new course owner and local developer George Roberts has stated that maintaining 27 holes would prove too costly, so his intention is to develop “The Good” into what has been termed a “high-end housing community.”

“But there will not be an interruption at any time,” Willis said. “There will always be 18 holes of golf here at The Hombre.”

### BAY POINT GOLF CLUB

The Bay Point Golf Club is part of Sheraton Bay Point Resort. The golf club features The Nicklaus Course, which



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### Signal Hill Golf Course

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**NICKLAUS COURSE AT BAY POINT, LEFT, AND HOLIDAY GOLF CLUB**

A signature, double-carry hole at Bay Point challenges golfers to navigate a salt marsh. Friendly, “family” tees have been added at the Holiday Golf Club, making for easier trips from tee to green.



served as a U.S. Open local-qualifying site in 2016; The Meadows Course; and a large practice facility, which includes a full-size driving range.

The resort’s ownership has made a \$30 million investment in the hotel, according to Ryan Mulvey, Bay Point Golf Club’s general manager.

“We’ve had a lot of things going on here in the last 18 months,” Mulvey summarized. This includes a \$1 million investment in maintenance and equipment for the courses, which are managed by Kemper Sports. “They’re in the best shape in a long time, if not ever,” Mulvey said.

There has also been a \$1 million renovation of the Club 19 Bar & Grill, as well as of the locker rooms, clubhouse and golf shop.

“We’ve really pushed the needle,” Mulvey said. “We’ve had a lot of fun, and we’ve done a lot of cool things so far.”

In terms of rounds played, Bay Point saw an increase from 37,000 in 2015 to 51,000 last year. And the number for the first three months of 2017 was 21,000.

**HOLIDAY GOLF CLUB**

The Holiday Golf Club’s most recent improvements deal with where players start and where they finish, according to Brad Carroll, Holiday’s PGA pro, and Richie Edwards, the club’s director of golf.

Several years ago, Holiday had its greens completely redone with new grass. Soon afterward new tee boxes were added. Depending on what set of tees you played, the course measured between 5,151 and

6,859 yards. But in June of last year, Holiday added its new “family tees,” and playing from them involves 4,019 yards.

“It makes it more enjoyable for seniors and beginners,” Carroll said. “It keeps them up to pace with those who can hit it longer.”

Carroll and Edwards refer to this development as “teeing it forward.”

“People can go home feeling good about themselves,” Carroll said. “We’ve gotten a lot of positive feedback, especially from senior ladies. They’ve been making birdies and pars they haven’t made in years.”

Edwards added, “Some of our ladies are so excited about hitting greens in regulation. They’re very excited about having that opportunity to make a birdie putt. And it’s definitely increased the number of rounds being played.” ●

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## Instant Attractions

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AT FIRST SIGHT

**“FUN IN THE SUN”** may be one of Panama City Beach’s unofficial mantras, but this booming beach town has a lot more to offer than simply world-class natural amenities. Sure, the 27 miles of pristine coastline are what draw people in. But once visitors arrive in this vacationers’ wonderland, there are a million reasons to stay.

Sightseers in need of a reprieve from the sunshine will have an array of adventures to choose from in Panama City Beach.

On the agenda? Well, for starters, how about partaking in a round of mini-golf, getting into a laser tag shootout with loved ones or making friends with a stingray? As a true, All-American seaside retreat, this beach is chock-full of fun attractions.

# Music & More

Fall season is a busy one

BY HANNAH BURKE

**FOR LOCALS OF PANAMA CITY BEACH**, fall is the most wonderful time of the year! Just because the weather is cooling down doesn’t mean the fun has to do the same. With family-friendly festivals, heated competitions and plenty of concerts to fuel the beat, not a week goes by without something to do.





**LOBZILLA** Schooners, which bills itself as the Last Local Beach Club, conducts an annual lobster tournament for divers who compete by collecting both spiny and shovelnose varieties.

### PEPSI GULF COAST JAM September 1–3

It's the biggest music event of the fall! With headliners like Luke Bryan, Jason Aldean and Little Big Town, there's no better place to spend Labor Day weekend. Bring your lawn chairs and snag a spot at Frank Brown Park for the ultimate celebration of country music. The fun starts at 2:20 p.m. each day and lasts until midnight, allowing you to dance under the sun and the stars! [GulfCoastJam.com](http://GulfCoastJam.com)

### SCHOONERS LOBSTER FESTIVAL September 11–17

Lobster lovers, behold the biggest lobster tournament and festival in the area! As Schooners restaurant serves up some mouthwatering, buttery lobster, divers can participate in events like the Big 6, shovelnose lobster and spiny lobster competitions to land the biggest catch. When the weigh-ins take place on the weekend, competitors are awarded grand prizes

for their achievements! [Schooners.com/Events/LobsterFestival](http://Schooners.com/Events/LobsterFestival)

### PIRATES OF THE HIGH SEAS October 6–8

Avast, ye landlubbers: Pirates have landed ashore Panama City Beach! This three-day event is fun for all ages, with scavenger hunts and a parade for the kiddies, live musical entertainment, food and a fireworks show. Come dressed up in your best



pirate garb and participate in a costume contest, or simply come as you are. Either way, it's free to get in, and fun will be had by all! [VisitPanamaCityBeach.com/PiratesoftheHighSeas](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com/PiratesoftheHighSeas)

**BLOODY MARY & MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
October 21

What's better than waking up with a bloody mary? Starting at 11 a.m., head down to Schooners for the opportunity

to taste test over 25 different bloody mary recipes. While you sample to your heart's content, enjoy some local music and food fare, and be sure to vote for your favorite cocktail. Winner of the best bloody mary has the honor of being crowned the "Big Tomato," and can proudly display the three foot topped trophy for the year to prove it. [Grandlagoon.org/BloodyMary](http://Grandlagoon.org/BloodyMary)



BLOODY MARY & MUSIC FESTIVAL



EMERALD COAST CRUIZIN'

**17TH ANNUAL THUNDER BEACH  
AUTUMN RALLY**  
October 25–29

Bikers, hit the road! It's time, again, to ride on down to the Thunder Beach Rally, the premier biker event of the Florida coast. Take in the fall beach scenery as you rev through seven different area sites, including Pier Park, Harley Davidson of PCB and Aaron Bessant Park. As you visit each venue, check out the live music, shop for accessories to customize your hog and browse the latest lineup of bike designs on display. [ThunderBeachProductions.com](http://ThunderBeachProductions.com)

**IRONMAN FLORIDA**  
November 4

The biggest challenge of the year is back, ready to be conquered by only the most adept triathletes. Participants are given 17 hours to swim a 2.4-mile course in the Gulf; bike a 112-mile trail that loops once; and run a two-loop, 26.2-mile course on foot. The race cuts through locations like Grand Lagoon and St. Andrews State Park, making it one of the most beautiful competitions around. [Ironman.com](http://Ironman.com)

**EMERALD COAST CRUIZIN'**  
November 8–11

Are you a lover of vintage cars? This fall, Aaron Bessant Park will display over 1,000 different hot rods and classic vehicles for your enjoyment. These beauties will be featured in their own parade as well as in other events, like the "cruiz-in" and car auction. Visitors won't want to miss out on the numerous live bands, meet and greets and presentation shows! [EmeraldCoastCruizin.com](http://EmeraldCoastCruizin.com)

**BEACH HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS**  
Thanksgiving Weekend

Thanksgiving Thursday may be the time for turkey, but that weekend, Santa Claus is coming to town! Beach Home for the Holidays waves goodbye to fall and sets the stage for the most magical month of the year. Aaron Bessant Park serves as the site of carol-themed concerts, an appearance by Santa and activities for the kids. The main event is the annual Christmas tree lighting, illuminating the spirit of the season! [VisitPanamaCityBeach.com/Holidays](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com/Holidays) ●

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The Snapper Bowl is a youth football tournament that welcomes teams from all over the country to Panama City Beach. The teams (classified according to age) feature players ages 6–17 who compete in a three-day-long playoff to determine the ultimate champion! 2017 marks the Bowl's 49th year running, making it the oldest premier, post-season tournament in the United States! Check out the action starting on Thanksgiving Day. [SnapperBowl.com](http://SnapperBowl.com)





# Up, Up and Away

Kiteboarding gives enthusiasts a lift **BY STEVE BORNHOFT**

**WAYNE GRISWOLD** got his start in kiteboarding in Southern California, at the turn of the century. But, in visiting friends on the Gulf Coast and later moving to Panama City Beach, he discovered a superior locale for the sport.

“It was like the Twilight Zone,” Griswold says. “Panama City Beach is the perfect place for kiteboarding, and there were just a few people here doing it.”

Among them was Rick Howe, who had transitioned from windsurfing to become a kiteboarding pioneer.

“He is inspirational,” Griswold says of Howe. “A forefather of kiteboarding. Not many guys do it into their 70s, but Rick has.”

Griswold, who works as a web designer and has an online kiteboarding shop ([pcbkitesurf.com](http://pcbkitesurf.com)), says that Florida — and Panama City Beach in particular — affords kiteboarders a long wind season and otherwise ideal conditions.

“The weather is mild, and we enjoy huge, soft, white-sand beaches and a sandy bottom in the Gulf,” Griswold enthuses. “It’s a great place to learn the sport. You don’t have any



### TAKING FLIGHT

Kiteboarders rate Panama City Beach an ideal spot for the sport, finding that it has a long wind season and noting that its soft sands make for happy landings.



## Fun on the Water

WHAT'S YOUR WATER SPORT PLEASURE?

### IS IT A CRUISE

at sunset, a chance to observe dolphins or a fishing trip? Are you enticed by SCUBA diving and snorkeling adventures? How about the fast-paced thrills of jet skiing, parasailing and skimboarding? Maybe you'd like the challenge of surfing and kiteboarding, or would be happiest with a peaceful paddle along the coast.

In Panama City Beach, water sports are a way of life, and you'll find the equipment, guides and lessons here to experience them to the fullest.

And the fun doesn't stop at the beautiful white sand beaches. The area is loaded with bays, lakes, rivers, bayous, swamps, creeks and lagoons — all waiting for you to explore and enjoy.

rocks or reefs to worry about. Plus, we have the protected waters in our bay system, so you can kiteboard in almost any wind condition.”

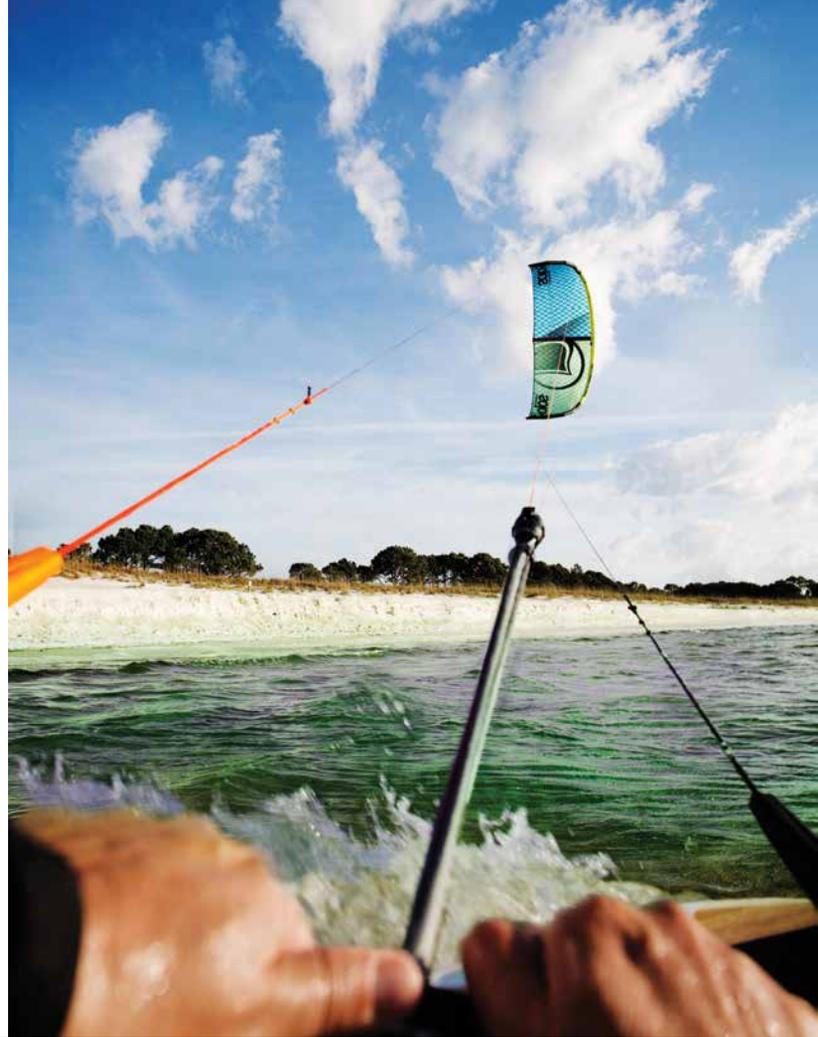
Kiteboarding hot spots are St. Andrews State Park and the bay shore along Carl Gray Park, near Gulf Coast State College just east of the Hathaway Bridge. People who think they may have an interest in kiteboarding, Griswold says, would do well to first “see it in action” at either of those locations. Kiteboarders tend to congregate at Carl Gray in the fall and winter months and at St. Andrews in the spring and summer.

“In the winter, we’re dealing with front-driven winds out of the north,” Griswold notes. “Summertime, we have thermal sea breezes. You can check your watch and about 3 p.m. every day, that wind is going to freshen.”

The spring of 2017 was an exceptional one for kiteboarders.

“We had 20 days with wind in April,” Griswold recounts — conditions like those found in the kiteboarding meccas of Maui, Cape Hatteras and Hood River, Oregon. “Plus, we have pristine, clear water.”

While some kiteboarders are self-taught, Griswold recommends lessons. Most students can learn the basics with six hours of instruction and, with two to three months of regular practice, become “self-sufficient.” Experience with skateboards, surfboards or snowboards helps, but



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**“In the winter, we’re dealing with front-driven winds out of the north. Summertime, we have thermal sea breezes. You can check your watch and about 3 p.m. every day, that wind is going to freshen.”**

— Wayne Griswold

kiteboarding is distinctly different from those activities.

The biggest hurdle to clear along the learning curve is figuring out how to control the kites, which may range up to 17 square meters in size.

“That makes for a lot of power,” Griswold emphasizes. “This isn’t sky diving. It’s like hang gliding.

“There is more skill than strength required, and once you learn how to steer the kite and get it back to where you took off from, you theoretically could go for hours on end. Kite control is 80 percent of it. You find yourself using mostly back and leg muscles, and the sensation can be a lot like weightlessness. The workout is about like riding a bike.”

Used gear in good condition is available for around \$1,000, Griswold says. New stuff will run about twice that. Some people may balk at the amount of the initial investment, but Griswold notes that you are buying everything you need at one time, and little or no maintenance is required.

“You don’t have to gas it up or keep it tuned,” Griswold points out. “All you need is wind.”

Griswold favors equipment manufactured by Liquid Force, but he also rates the Cabrinha and North Kites brands highly.

The gear is actually quite portable: The sail and harness fit in a backpack, and boards max out at about four feet in length.

Hydrofoiling, in which enthusiasts plane across the water as if they were riding on a hoverboard, is emerging as a popular new variation on the kiteboarding theme. Boards are equipped with a mast and wings, and hydrofoilers may reach speeds of 30 to 40 knots while operating, like kiteboarders, in near-total silence.

From the air, it is not unusual for Griswold and his colleagues to spy sea turtles, dolphins, stingrays and the occasional shark.

Unusual was the time that Griswold spied six hammerhead sharks swimming in a group near St. Andrews State Park.

Kiteboarding is likely to remain a sport populated by a relatively small number of passionate devotees, but Griswold finds that anyone who invests in and learns to kiteboard has a hard time hanging it up.

Will kiteboarding for Griswold, like Howe, become a lifetime sport? Perhaps. Meanwhile, Griswold wants to get Howe, currently dealing with a bad ankle, back up in the air.

“I’ll carry his gear to the water’s edge, and he will be able to take it from there,” Griswold is certain. “Once you’re hooked into that harness, and the vertical lift takes over, you’re on your way.”

For kiteboarding conditions and advice, contact Wayne Griswold at (850) 866-0092 or email him at [info@pcbkitesurf.com](mailto:info@pcbkitesurf.com). He’s sure to know which way the wind blows. ●

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What do you dream of reeling in? Do you see yourself chasing a big cobia or pulling a large grouper or snapper up off a shipwreck on the Gulf floor?

In Panama City Beach, you can troll for mackerel, target redfish and tarpon on fly tackle or just take the kids out for a day on the water to have a good time.

With three public piers on the Gulf of Mexico, lucky spots to fish from shore and countless charters available, Panama City Beach has something to offer every angler. Remember, in Panama City Beach, fishing season lasts all year long.





**WHILE THE ORNATE** lionfish is popular among aquarists, it presents problems in the Gulf of Mexico where, as an invasive species without predators, it threatens populations of native fish.

# Lionfish Tamers

Scuba divers help eradicate a worrisome, yet edible, invasive species.

**BY JASON DEHART**

**IN THE OCEAN,** the mighty ocean, the lionfish sleeps tonight.

But by tomorrow it could be at your local seafood market, and then on your table.

Lionfish, which are native to the South Pacific and Indian oceans, were accidentally released into South Florida waters in 1992. One story blames Hurricane Andrew for destroying a seaside aquarium that allowed six lionfish to escape into Biscayne Bay.

Those escapees, along with other pet lionfish subsequently released by their owners, have created an infestation that now reaches from the Caribbean up to Cape Hatteras. Absent the predators in the lionfish's native range, it's up to humans to try to make a dent in their numbers and limit their impact on local sea life and environment. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission encourages the harvesting of these fish; the season is open year-round, there's no bag limit or minimum size limit and no permit is generally required if you're using spears or nets specifically designed for lionfish. However, you'll generally need a recreational fishing license if you use something other than a spear, such as hook and line.



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Divemaster Carlos Orozco of Diver's Den in Panama City Beach said he and his diving buddies have been spearfishing lionfish for the last five years, and there is no end in sight.

"I was introduced to lionfish about 10 years ago but had no idea the population would explode," he said. "For example, at one of our local spots I can go down and see about 20 of them where there were only five or six four years ago. I can go down any given day and see them, big ones too."

Orozco said he uses a type of hand-held spear to capture and haul in the fish. The catch is contained in a Zookeeper, a lionfish cage that looks like a PVC pipe. "You can spear four or five in a minute, sometimes," he said. "When you're done, you head back to the surface and put them on ice."

Lionfish like to live around any kind of structure or coral outcropping they can find on the seafloor, and Orozco said they don't usually wander more than 100 feet from the place they've "attached" themselves too. Which means if they're there, you can find them bunched together in a pride, as it were. There are spots, he said, where there might be 40 to 100 fish in one small area. They consume everything in sight: juvenile fish (including grouper), shrimp, whatever will fit in their mouths.

"They are voracious eaters. Eventually, they eat other lionfish when there's nothing left to eat," Orozco said.

Currently, lionfish harvesting is limited to scuba divers. They are very rarely caught using hook and line, but sometimes traps are used. Both methods are hit and miss, Orozco said. Most of the harvesting is done recreationally



**“As long as you avoid the 18 spines, you’re good. The meat is very white, flakey looking meat. It’s phenomenal. There are times when we’re cleaning, we’ll eat a fillet right then and there; it’s absolutely delicious. I would compare it to a step above snapper, better than grouper, but that’s my opinion.”**

— Carlos Orozco,  
Divemaster of Diver’s Den

by divers who want the meat for themselves, but as the word gets out about the quality of the meat, it seems that more divers are looking to make a few bucks from their hobby. Divers sell the fish for between \$4 and \$5 a pound to certain local markets, which in turn sell it for between \$8 and \$12 a pound, he said. The sale of commercially harvested lionfish requires a saltwater products license, according to the FWC.

“In the last year, more divers have gotten the permit to sell them,” Orozco said. “It’s not needed to harvest, but to bring it to market you need a permit. I kill them for myself but I’ve talked to guys who have caught 90 pounds and turned around to make a quick \$400.”

Despite the venomous spines that are characteristic of the species, lionfish meat is not poisonous. Filing takes a little care, but the meat is worth it, Orozco said.

“As long as you avoid the 18 spines, you’re good. The meat is very white, flakey looking meat. It’s phenomenal. There are times when we’re cleaning, we’ll eat a fillet right then and there; it’s absolutely delicious,” he said. “I would compare it to a step above snapper, better than grouper, but that’s my opinion.”

To help get rid of these things, Orozco said that more people need to either get involved in scuba diving and spearfishing, or they can “build a better mousetrap.” He’s open to ideas, because lionfish pose a serious threat to the health of our marine ecosystems.

“(Lionfish) are going to start affecting our reefs. They eat everything. They don’t eat the coral or the sea fans, they just start eating the small fish and once they do that, there won’t be anything for us to enjoy,” he said. ●



# COASTAL CASUALS

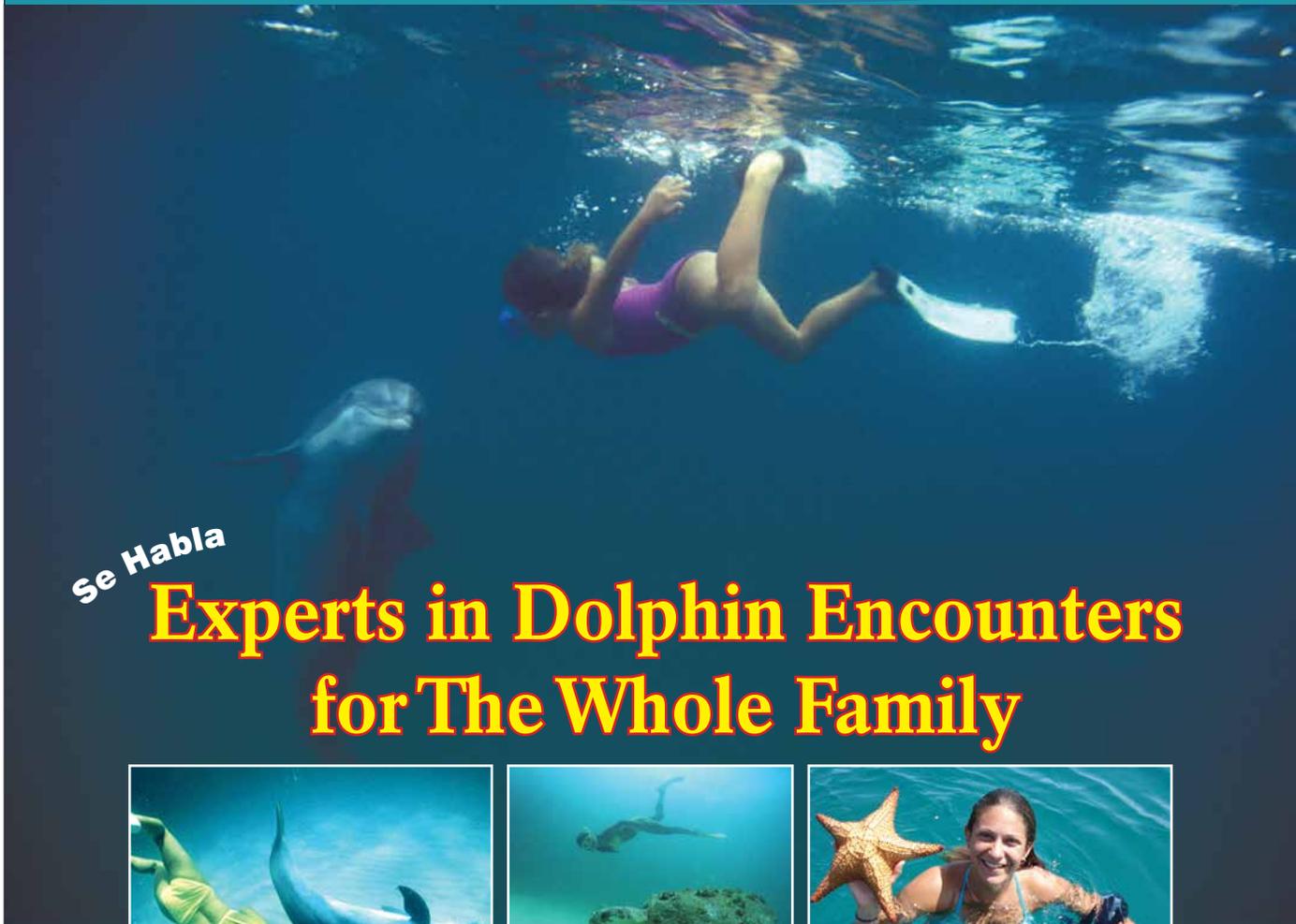
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## Natural Diversions

### SET OUT TO

**EXPLORE** local state parks and beaches and find out firsthand how diverse and rare animal species and plant life make Panama City Beach a nature lover's wonderland. With 27 miles of beach, a multitude of parks and forests and a 700-acre natural barrier island, ecotourists have their choice of wonderful adventures, from hiking and biking to kayaking and canoeing. You don't have to go far to enjoy a swim, look for shells or just log some great bird-watching time.



**EXPLORING THE SHALLOWS** The jetties at St. Andrews State Park teem with wildlife, making this area the ideal location for snorkeling.

A man is snorkeling underwater in clear turquoise water. He is wearing a yellow snorkel mask and a yellow snorkel. His arms are outstretched, and he is looking towards the camera. The water is very clear, and there are some bubbles around him. The background is a bright, sunlit underwater scene.

# GILLS GALORE

St. Andrews State Park  
is a paradise for snorkelers

BY KIRSTIN REDFIELD

**BOASTING ONE-AND-A-HALF** miles of rippling water and toasty sand, St. Andrews State Park provides the perfect relaxation destination for locals and tourists alike.

What originally served as a harbor defense installation during World War II became a sandy oasis for the community in 1951. Today, the park has jetties, two fishing piers, boat ramp, nature trails, campground and even a shuttle service to nearby Shell Island. So whether you enjoy soaking up the rays on the park's beaches or fishing off the piers, St. Andrews State Park has what you're looking for.

If you're seeking adventure on your next park outing, but don't want to deal with the gear needed for surfing and scuba diving, grab a mask and flippers and give snorkeling a try instead. The park's jetties serve as an underwater wildlife refuge and harbor an incredible variety of species. Think of the jetties as the area's first artificial reef.

The Gulf's excellent water clarity, which gets even better during the

fall months, allows for plentiful encounters with starfish, crabs and other crustaceans and dozens of varieties of fish.

Snorkelers may choose to slip over the rocks into the pass of St. Andrews Bay and inspect fish that prefer to operate in waters with a swift current. They are likely to include schools of mullet that nibble on the grasses that cling to the rocks; or sheepshead, sometimes called convict fish given their white-and-black striped appearance, that have human-like teeth capable of crushing barnacles and other hard stuff. Juvenile grouper spend time on the rocks before they venture offshore. Hold your breath and head for the bottom and you may spy a flounder covered with a dusting of sand or the improbable batfish with pectoral fins that serve as feet. Peering out from crevices in the rocks, you'll see tiny blennies whose cylindrical shape and antennae make them look like aquatic caterpillars.

Snorkelers should be sure to observe regulations pertaining to the activity, including the requirement

## FISH ON THE ROCKS

The jetties that stabilize the pass to St. Andrews Bay attract many varieties of marine life, ranging from corals to prized redfish. Parents introduce young children to the marine environment at the sheltered Kiddie Pool on landward side of the western jetty.



for dive flags and the prohibition on any spearfishing at the park.

The more cautious snorkeler may opt to stay on the landward side of the jetties in an area known appropriately as the Kiddie Pool. Removed from currents and waves and perfect for wading, the Kiddie Pool is a great place to introduce children to the marine environment. Too, countless children have learned to swim there over the years.

The water deepens as you approach the jetties from the Kiddie Pool's shallows. On this sheltered side, snorkelers can count on seeing brightly colored tropical fishes including damselfish, butterfly fish and sergeant majors — another name derived from a fish's striped coloration.

Perhaps the largest fish related to the rocks are big, bull redfish, which are fond of hanging out in the pass and dining on juvenile blue crabs as they are swept out toward the Gulf by an outgoing tide.

Anglers like to fish from the jetties, meaning that snorkelers need to be alert to

the possibility of sharing the water with sharp, shiny objects. Snorkelers who are also fishermen, may find themselves harvesting tackle lost to the rocks by unlucky anglers.

Recently, evidence of a developing coral reef has been discovered at the jetties in about 15 feet of water. Four species of coral have been identified: tube coral, robust ivory tree coral, cup coral and sea whips. The appearance of the coral has coincided with the discovery of a certain type of algae that supports the slow-growing animals.

Snorkeling is easily mastered. The novice will soon learn how to clear his snorkel upon surfacing and to remove, while below the surface, any water that may intrude upon his mask.

For those who long for a thrilling snorkeling adventure but don't own any snorkeling equipment, The Pier Store (open seasonally), The Jetties Store and The Camp Store (both open March–October) offer snorkeling packages that include a



round trip boat ride to Shell Island and all the snorkeling equipment a person needs. Package prices are \$26.95 for adults and \$19.95 for kids 12 and under.

The stores also sell snacks and sundries and rent out beach chairs, kayaks, camping equipment and fishing gear.

Once you've purchased your snorkeling package, the Shell Island Shuttle will escort you to the west end of the island, which is also a part of St. Andrews State Park. If you're lucky, on the way there you'll get the chance to meet some of Shell Island's special visitors: bottle-nosed dolphins.

So whether you're a tourist or a local, a regular or a first-timer, St. Andrews State Park is your destination for snorkeling! ●

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This fully staffed, clean marina located next to St. Andrew Pass is open 7 days a week. Radio dispatched dock attendants are fully trained to handle your docking experience with ease. From a well-marked channel to an easy approach fuel dock with customer discounts, Bay Point Marina is a place you and your boat should call home.

# LET'S GO G

FANCY CAMPS OF PANAMA CITY BEACH PROVIDES  
GLAMOROUS OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES

BY HANNAH BURKE  
PHOTOS BY FANCY CAMPS

The mosquitoes are biting; your back is aching. It's been an hour, and you're still struggling with pitching the tent. The kids are already eager for s'mores, but you haven't even begun to gather firewood yet. Camping is supposed to be fun ... right?

For nature lovers who want to experience the beauty of Panama City Beach and, at the same time, enjoy luxury-getaway amenities, Fancy Camps has you covered. This service brings glamour to a camping experience, resulting in a trend known as "glamping." Think back to bygone days when high-class families would make extravagant excursions to Africa for an "authentic" safari experience. We've all seen the photos: women in jewels and men in linen suits relaxing on settees in large, fully furnished tents. That image of opulence is exactly what inspired Micah and Danielle Heller to create Fancy Camps.



# LAMPING!



**“We have full access to St. Andrews State Park, 365 days a year. Our guests can come in any number of parties and stay any number of days, as long as we’re not booked otherwise.” — Micah Heller**



“My family grew up camping a lot,” Micah says. “Just sleeping bags and a regular ol’ tent. My wife, I think, went a couple of times as a kid, but was never much one for camping. It was a combination of that, and the fact that when we started this, we had three young kids. They really liked the idea of comfortably camping out in the backyard and loved going in my parent’s little pop-up tent. We just kind of thought it would be an experience we could create and bring to the area that people would really enjoy.”

Say you’re looking to spend the weekend outdoors. Fancy Camps provides services in Panama City Beach at historic St. Andrews State Park. “A standard package would include (one of) our 16-foot cotton-canvas tents,” Micah says. “They come with queen-sized beds atop box springs, complete with linens and duvets. Furniture would include nightstands, lamps, cooling or heating units and a complete seating area. Outside, we like to bring a cool vibe to the site by decorating with string lights and by providing a fire pit with wood and seating around it.”

While that’s just the gist of it, glampers should know that Fancy Camps is a fully customizable service. Micah Heller stresses that the heart of the business is really just catering to each individual guest as much as possible.

Are you an artist? An easel and canvas will be set up right in front of your campsite, fully stocked with paint, brushes and a pallet. The more athletically inclined visitors need only to designate their vehicle of choice: Bikes, kayaks, boats and YOLO boards are provided upon request.

“We have full access to St. Andrews State Park, 365 days a year,” Micah explains. “Our guests can come in any number of parties and stay any number of days, as long as we’re not booked otherwise.”

St. Andrews State Park is the perfect destination for glampers looking to absorb the area’s rich history and environment. Just outside of the campsite are two different fishing piers from which to choose, as well as two nature trails that allow for birdwatching and hiking. The park encompasses a mile-and-a-half of beach,

granting each guest easy access to the Gulf and Grand Lagoon. With quick access to concessions and refreshment facilities, what more could a gl camper need?

One of the greatest aspects of fancy camping is that it can be enjoyed by virtually anyone. Micah notes that people from all walks of life use Fancy Camps, be they young couples looking for a romantic, intimate getaway or large families in search of memory-making experiences. In the case of the latter, Fancy Camps provides sleeping mats and other child-themed tent arrangements that kids can’t get enough of. And it’s not uncommon for older folks to enlist the services of Fancy Camps in order to experience nature without having to endure the strenuous disadvantages that come with conventional camping. Its versatility, perhaps, is why Fancy Camps even expands to specialty events, accommodating campers on private property.

Those who are looking to enjoy a backyard, family campout or a camping-themed birthday party for their little one can call Fancy Camps to set it up. This also extends to weddings, music events and other functions.

The beauty of it all? Not having to lift a finger.

“I think people just like the convenience of it,” Micah says. “All we need you to do is throw together a backpack full of clothes and beach supplies for the weekend, show up, and the rest is done for you.”

To make a reservation, please visit [Fancycamps.com](http://Fancycamps.com). ●

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# WHAT'S NEW

BUSINESS  
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EXPANDS

BY HANNAH BURKE



HAMPTON INN & SUITES PANAMA CITY BEACH

**I**n our rapidly evolving world, predictability is a luxury we are rarely afforded. Although we can remain fairly certain that Panama City Beach's famous waters and shores will always be there, the area's urban landscape is ever changing. The number of visitors seeking either an adventurous or a tranquil getaway from their everyday lives is rising, meaning accommodations for these individuals are increasing in number, as are businesses that cater to vacationers and locals alike. Yes, change is in the air; but one thing is certain: PCB will always offer you the very best.

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The Beachfront Holiday Inn Express opened its doors to guests this summer, debuting 147 rooms and suites, an indoor and an outdoor pool, a lazy river and a beachside bar and grill. Located directly on the shore of Front Beach Road, the beach is right at guests' fingertips; but they may not want to stray far from the hotel's amenities. [HIExpressPCBeach.com](http://HIExpressPCBeach.com)

**HAMPTON INN & SUITES**

The Hampton Inn & Suites, one of the newest beachfront hotels to pop up in Panama City Beach, offers guests dining facilities, poolside lounging and an ideal location. This hotel chain, renowned for luxurious comfort, ensures that each of the Panama City Beach site's 180 rooms are crafted with a unique design and are equipped with free Wi-Fi and all other essential amenities. Guests are within walking distance to the premier shopping area of Pier Park and have direct access to the beach. [Hamptoninn3.Hilton.com/en/hotels/florida/hampton-inn-and-suites-panama-city-beach-beachfront-PFNBFHX/index.html](http://Hamptoninn3.Hilton.com/en/hotels/florida/hampton-inn-and-suites-panama-city-beach-beachfront-PFNBFHX/index.html)



**LUXURIOUS COMFORT**

Operating from a primo location, the new Hampton Inn & Suites is within walking distance of Pier Park.

HAMPTON INN & SUITES PANAMA CITY BEACH

RECREATION

LEGENDARY MARINE

Legendary Marine is a long-standing fixture within the Emerald Coast's boating community, having built its reputation by providing decades of exceptional sales and services to boaters across the Panhandle. This past May, Legendary Marine of Panama City Beach opened the doors on its new Thomas Drive location at Grand Lagoon, the spot that marks "go" for those heading out into the waters of St. Andrews Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. This impressive new facility features 33,000 square feet of indoor showroom and a state-of-the-art repair facility that includes two drive-thru service bays, making customer drop-off and pick-up a breeze. When it comes to all things boating, Legendary Marine is 100% committed to delivering each customer a truly remarkable experience.

[LegendaryMarine.com/Panama-City-Beach-location.htm](http://LegendaryMarine.com/Panama-City-Beach-location.htm)



LEGENDARY MARINE

LEGENDARY MARINE, PANAMA CITY BEACH



LEGENDARY MARINE, PANAMA CITY BEACH

## LOTUS AT TWILIGHT



HOLLY GARDNER

### DINING

#### ANDY'S FLOUR POWER

A local favorite, Andy's Flour Power treats both sweet and savory cravings with their bakery-style breakfast and lunch menu. Owned by Chef John Certo, the restaurant operates under his philosophy of cooking not with fancy ingredients, but with fresh ingredients. The eatery's new location on Thomas Drive allows for plenty of space for guests to enjoy fresh pastries, omelets, café sandwiches and more. Stop by during the week for either breakfast or lunch, or enjoy the special brunch menu that is served with live jazz on weekends only! [Andy'sFlourPower.com](http://Andy'sFlourPower.com)

#### LOTUS AT TWILIGHT

A hidden jewel within Panama City Beach, The Lotus Café & Juice Bar is a delicious, healthy eatery known for its use of organic ingredients and its nutritious juice menu. Previously only open during lunch hours, the café now provides dinner and evening entertainment as part of a new experience, called, "Lotus at Twilight." The café's serene Zen garden, which is illuminated by candlelight, is the site for guest dining and for special events, which take place on Thursdays–Saturdays, from 5–9:30 p.m. These events include art exhibits, art shows and live music. [LotusCafeatzen.com](http://LotusCafeatzen.com)

#### DIEGO'S BURRITO FACTORY

Diego's is the place to order customizable burritos, street tacos and delectable margaritas. Regular visitors to the restaurant are never surprised to find it packed with patrons, but the crowd keeps the authentic, fun vibe of the joint alive. Previously only found on Front Beach Road, Diego's launched a new location on Thomas Drive, right in the heart of the Grand Lagoon. New location but same great vibe and scrumptious menu. [DiegosBurritoFactory.com](http://DiegosBurritoFactory.com) ●



ANDY'S FLOUR POWER

BECK GRABEN

# SHELL ISLAND

A paradise impeccably preserved

BY HANNAH BURKE

## DEEP ROOTS

Sea oats, with their extensive root systems, stabilize dunes and allow them to become larger over time.



**H**ave you ever wondered what it would be like to create your own reality? Say you're lounging on the beach, and you had the ability to silence other visitors, traffic noise and the music escaping a nearby condo, leaving only the tranquil sound of crashing waves.

Maybe you'd want to take things a step further and peel back the layers of time. What was it like for the first people ever to set foot on the very beach you're on? A visit to Panama City Beach's developed shores are looked forward to by hundreds of thousands of people every year, but can you imagine a scene in which resorts, restaurants and other infrastructure were completely erased?

Shell Island is our Shangri-La, where this fantasy becomes reality. An extension of St. Andrews State Park, the Shell Island's stark white sands have been traversed over time by Native Americans, Spanish explorers and the infamous pirates who once patrolled waters off of Panama City Beach. It was known as Land's End Peninsula until the 1930s, when the shipping channel to St. Andrews Bay was created.

Barrier islands serve to protect the mainland from the ravages of storm surges. Shell Island acts as a natural defense system separating St. Andrews Bay from the Gulf of Mexico. Exposure to the Gulf means that the island is constantly shape shifting. Shell Island has slowly become a shallow peninsula for now, but it is a dynamic environment owing to the influence of wind and waves.

Generally, the island is characterized by dunes that taper down to barrier flats that host scrub-pine forests, which add color to an otherwise desert-like environment. Salt marshes are the vanguard of the barrier island's defense against storms. As wave action increases, they absorb surplus seawater and, as the storm retreats, the peat-bottomed marshes quickly drain.

Shell Island is devoid of human development, meaning that visitors should be equipped with the proper essentials before venturing out. Various vendors provide tours to Shell Island, including the highly popular Shell Island Shuttle, a service that runs out of St. Andrews Park every 30 minutes throughout much of the year.

Wildlife frequenting the island shoreline include crabs, nesting sea turtles and



endangered beach mice while among the pines, deer, hares and even a few alligators may be encountered.

Following much of these storms, visitors enjoy collecting ... shells. Conch shells, sand dollars, colorful pastel coquinas and more.

Snorkelers find that the island's jetties are home to tropical fish, starfish, seahorses and stingrays. And many visitors venture out as passengers on

specialized tours to see the majestic and acrobatic bottlenose dolphins.

As an owner of three businesses, Island Time Sailing, Shell Island Boat Rentals and Tours and Blue Dolphin Tours, Ted Davison is an expert at showcasing dolphin pods to anyone who climbs aboard one of his vessels.

Island Time Sailing provides a two-hour sunset sail and dolphin watch, along with a three-and-a-half-hour snorkel and dolphin swim trip, every day.

"People have been coming to Island Time since 1999. Lots of people celebrate anniversaries or birthdays with us because it's just a wonderful, relaxing way to see another part of Bay County that most folks don't even know about," Davison says.

Shell Island Boat Rentals and Tours is Ted's oldest business, offering pontoon boats for guests to rent for either whole or half days. Adventuresome families may elect to rent personal watercraft and ride the waves right alongside dolphins!

"Blue Dolphin Tours provides two-hour, private cruises and snorkel trips with a captain and tour guide. We've been

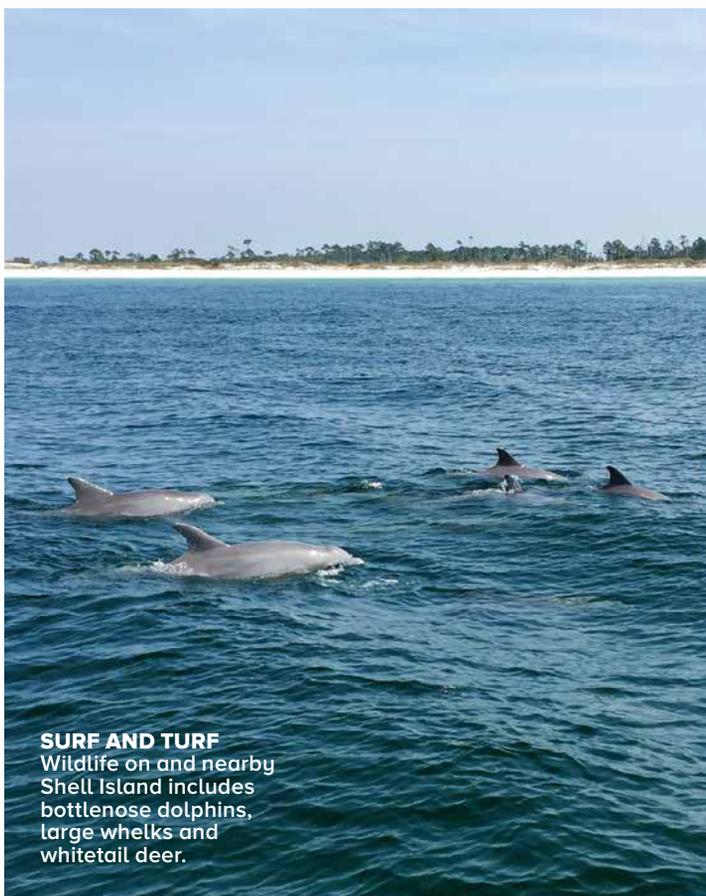
doing that since the early 80s," Davison notes. "It's just something you have to experience for yourself. You can't put into words how beautiful your surroundings are, and you just realize that we've been so blessed with this place to have fun. We're good at showing people how to do it."

The tours launch from Treasure Island Marina and take only six passengers at a time to the island. Davison adds that fewer passengers produce less noise that may intimidate dolphins. Pods are most often found near the jetties, where plenty of food can be found. When dolphins are feeding, boat captains are mindful of the dolphins' space, but provide guests with the chance to witness an essential part of their daily routine. Later in the tour, the boat is anchored to give snorkelers the opportunity to swim with the dolphins and other types of sea life.

Davison sums things up this way: "I can't tell you a better way for people to get together and have fun, to just get away from the chaos, including social media, and make some wonderful memories of a lifetime." ●

**"PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BOARDING THE ISLAND TIME SINCE 1999. LOTS OF PEOPLE CELEBRATE ANNIVERSARIES OR BIRTHDAYS WITH US BECAUSE IT'S JUST A WONDERFUL, RELAXING WAY TO SEE ANOTHER PART OF BAY COUNTY THAT MOST FOLKS DON'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT."**

— Ted Davison



**SURF AND TURF**  
Wildlife on and nearby Shell Island includes bottlenose dolphins, large whelks and whitetail deer.



TED DAVISON



# The WonderWorks Experience



# WONDER WORKS™

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Visit [wonderworkspcb.com](http://wonderworkspcb.com) to plan your visit, check specials and purchase tickets. WonderWorks opens daily at 10am.

# Panama City Beach's Best View is an Emerald View.



Whether exploring the beach, or simply relaxing and soaking in the sun, Emerald View Resorts has the best views in Panama City Beach! Not only that, you'll discover locations that will suit every need... and budget.

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[summerhousepc.com](http://summerhousepc.com)

# A Shallow Existence

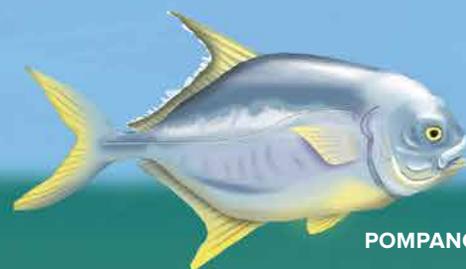
For creatures near shore, life keeps coming in waves

BY STEVE BORNHOFT // ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN RUSSO

**VISITORS TO PANAMA CITY BEACH'S** shores have carried a treasury's worth of sand dollars, some painted, some accessorized, others unadorned, home to places that have never seen a gator, gallinule or gag grouper. A relative of sea urchins, the sand dollar is covered in purple velvety spines when alive and moves about on little tube feet ingesting any organic detritus it happens upon. It shares the surf zone with far more mobile inhabitants — whiting, pompanos, sea stars and blue crabs — to whom it may fall prey, but it seems unlikely that even bottom feeders would pass on a sand flea or shrimp in favor of what little is left of a sand dollar after you subtract the crunchy parts. So it is that the sand dollar, whose favorite number may be five — it is topped by a five-pointed star, has five openings in its skeleton and has five jaws in its mouth — has little to fear until a snorkeler, trying out his new mask and fins, spies outlined on the bottom what might be a fifty cent piece, but proves to be quite another form of currency.



SAND DOLLAR



POMPANO



COBIA



COWNOSE RAY



WHITING



BLUE CRAB



STAR FISH



# Music, Food and Fun for Everyone

**Summer Concert Series Aug. 1–Aug. 10 (Thursdays)** Hot summer nights are made for music, and the Summer Concert Series has become a beloved summertime tradition in PCB. Enjoy a FREE concert in the park every Thursday at Aaron Bessant Park Amphitheater — bring your lawn chairs and blankets and enjoy the sounds of summer music; coolers, food and pets are welcome. The 2017 lineup can be found at [VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com).

**Groovin' on the Green Aug. 1–Sept. 3 (Mondays and a couple of Sundays)** This free weekly summer concert series takes place in Carillon Beach (west end of PCB) and features a myriad of musical stylings including bluegrass, Top 40, beach, reggae, country, blues and jazz. Bring your chairs or blankets, a cooler and snacks or purchase refreshments from one of the local vendors. Sit back and enjoy! [VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com)

**Grand Lagoon Grand Slam Aug. 10–12** This offshore fishing tournament is limited to outboard powered fishing boats (including center consoles, walkarounds, cuddy cabin boats, catamarans, etc.). Teams will target three species: tuna, wahoo and dolphin, with a special optional billfish category added for 2017. [GrandLagoonGrandSlam.com](http://GrandLagoonGrandSlam.com)

**Pepsi Gulf Coast Jam Sept. 1–3** More a start to an event-packed fall than an end to summer, Labor Day weekend in PCB means Pepsi Gulf Coast Jam. This highly anticipated concert has been bringing the hottest country music stars to the beach since 2013, ratcheting up the bar year after year. This year is no exception. Headlining acts for 2017 include Luke Bryan, Little Big Town and Jason Aldean. Book a concert package from a participating lodging property for special seating and free shuttle rides to Frank Brown Park. [GulfCoastJam.com](http://GulfCoastJam.com)

**28th Annual Lobster Festival Sept. 11–17** The biggest seven-day lobster festival in Florida takes place at Schooners during the middle of September. Lobster

tournament divers hunt for local lobsters and vie for prizes, while spectators devour delicious lobster dishes and participate in a sand sculpting contest. [Schooners.com](http://Schooners.com)

**Bloody Mary & Music Festival Oct. 21** Enjoy all-you-can-drink bloody mary samples from 25 vendors before casting your vote for the best bloody mary. The winner (the “Big Tomato”) will be awarded a trophy and some serious bragging rights. A full bar and local eats will also be available. Admission is \$20 per person (\$15 for military/first responders with ID). The spectacular Gulf of Mexico provides the backdrop for this event held at Schooners. [GrandLagoon.org](http://GrandLagoon.org)

**17th Annual Thunder Beach Motorcycle Rally Oct. 25–29 & May 2–6** Known as “The Most Biker Friendly FREE Rally in the United States,” Thunder Beach Motorcycle Rally is held twice yearly in Panama City Beach during the first weekend in May and mid-October. Bikers from around the country enjoy scenic rides along the Emerald Coast, live entertainment and local cuisine. [ThunderBeachProductions.com](http://ThunderBeachProductions.com)

**Emerald Coast Cruizin' Nov. 8–11 & March 7–10** Twice a year, Panama City Beach pays homage to the classics ... cars that is. Activities include cruise-ins, concerts, parties, vendors, food, parades and celebrity appearances. Car enthusiasts of all ages are welcome to check out the thousands of hot rods, customs, muscle cars, trucks and classics on display. [EmeraldCoastCruizin.com](http://EmeraldCoastCruizin.com)

**Chili Vibrations Nov. 17–18** Anyone convinced that his chili is the best around can face off with others (who probably believe the very same thing) at the Chili Vibrations World Music Festival & Chili Cookoff at the world famous Spinnaker Beach Club. Musical performers will include The Hip Abduction, The Movement, Passafire, Leilani Wolfgamm, Horizen and Fish Out of Water. The cookoff competition will take place in red chili and salsa divisions. Top three place

winners will receive cash prizes and trophies. [Chilivibrations.com](http://Chilivibrations.com)

**Beach Home for the Holidays Thanksgiving Weekend** Kicking off Thanksgiving weekend, Beach Home for the Holidays includes a fun-filled lineup of activities and events to entice families from far and wide to build new traditions and celebrate the season together in Panama City Beach. Highlights include the lighting of a 30-foot Christmas tree, magical Santa's Village and holiday music concerts (past acts include Wynonna Judd, John Berry and Panama City POPS Orchestra). [VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com)

**Panama City Beach Marathon Dec. 2** Runners can choose from a marathon, half-marathon, 5K or kid's fun run in this popular annual event — regardless of the division, all win with a view of the Gulf of Mexico to guide them along. [PCBMarathon.com](http://PCBMarathon.com)



Pirates of the High Seas Fest

## Oct. 6–8

Columbus Day weekend brings waves of fun-filled adventure to Panama City Beach each year with the annual Pirates of the High Seas Fest. The whole family can play together, and weekend activities include a scavenger hunt, pirate invasions, water battle, kids parade and main parade, live music, fireworks and so much more! [VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com)



## Ironman Florida

**Nov. 4, 2017**

What began as a challenge between groups of Navy SEALs has become one of the most recognized endurance events in the world. The Ironman consists of a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride and a 26.2-mile run, with the Florida edition of the challenge serving as one of the most popular races on the circuit. Too much to take on? Check out the new Ironman 70.3 Gulf Coast in May ... half the course with all the fun! [Ironman.com](http://Ironman.com)

# Perfect Location, Perfect Vacation



  
Motel and Tower

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(850) 234-2232  
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## OUR FAMILY IS YOUR FAMILY

Location, cleanliness and value are standard at the Flamingo Motel. We do not charge for extra people, parking, local calls or cleaning. Value is our mission and we publish our rates in advance.

Located directly on the beach within walking distance of Pier Park and across the street from Gulf World, you would be hard pressed to find a better location on Panama City Beach.

**OLD FLORIDA FEEL WITH MODERN AMENITIES**  
***See our website for low daily rates.***

**Ninth Annual Beach Ball Drop Dec. 31**

Celebrate New Year's Eve on the beach! A family-friendly countdown at 8 p.m. culminates with fireworks and 10,000 beach balls being dropped over the crowd. As the seconds tick down to midnight, thousands of revelers watch the Celebration Tower as a glowing beach ball descends to signify the start of a New Year and kicks off a second round of fireworks. Live music sets a festive tone all night long!  
[VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com)

**2018 EVENTS**

**Panama City Beach Mardi Gras & Music Festival**

**Feb. 9–10** The most family-friendly Mardi Gras celebration on the Gulf Coast, this two-day festival takes place in Pier Park and is one of the most fun Mardi Gras events anywhere. Enjoy a weekend filled with parades, float tours, street fair, kids zone and live music (and lots and lots of beads).  
[VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com)

**UNwined March 23–24**

Guests can raise a glass while mixing and mingling with elite chefs, mixologists and top tastemakers at this hip signature spring event. UNwined features superb craft beer, spirits and wine from around the world, along with culinary creations by Northwest Florida's leading chefs, accompanied by outstanding musical talent (2016 featured Grammy-nominated and acclaimed American folk-rock band The Avett Brothers).  
[VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com)

**Seabreeze Jazz Festival**

**April 18–22** Named a "Top 10 Jazz Festival in the USA" by JazzIZ Magazine and recently nominated as "Best Jazz Festival" at the Oasis Smooth Jazz Awards, the Seabreeze Jazz Festival

combines top national smooth jazz artists with a full weekend of fun, sun, great beaches and good times. The event attracts thousands of fans from the U.S., Canada and Europe for the ultimate performance-packed weekend of jazz.  
[SeabreezeJazzFestival.com](http://SeabreezeJazzFestival.com)

**Ironman 70.3 Gulf Coast May 12**

This newly rebranded endurance event, previously known as the Gulf Coast Triathlon, begins with a 1.2-mile, open water swim in the Gulf of Mexico. Competitors then bike 56 miles on an out-and-back course through rural Bay County and Panama City Beach. The final leg, a 13.1-mile run, concludes with a spectacular finish at the Edgewater Beach & Golf Resort. IRONMAN 70.3 Gulf Coast will offer 50 slots to the 2018 IRONMAN 70.3 World Championship.

**Jeep Beach Jam May 15–20**

Jeep enthusiasts from throughout the United States travel to Frank Brown Park for this five-day event dedicated to all things Jeep. This family-friendly event includes obstacle courses, bonfires, jeep parade, bounce houses, live music and so much more!  
[JeepBeachJam.com](http://JeepBeachJam.com)

[Visit VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com) for more details.



SHELLY SWANGER



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# Stylin'

*Peer out from behind your Costas, survey the people that surround you in, on and around Panama City Beach, and you'll find that fashions here tend toward easy, breezy and unpretentious — the kinds of clothing that easily transition from land to sea. And, of course, when football season arrives, people tend to wear their allegiances on their sleeves, from crimson to garnet to blue and orange.*

**BOURBON & BOWTIE BRACELETS**  
(\$36–44)



**DEJA VU JACKET**  
(\$64)



**RETRO POP SUNGLASSES**  
(\$24)



## DEJA VU

Deja Vu Boutique is an inspiring collection of young contemporary clothing that fits the style of the bohemian and feminist woman of yesterday and the modern trendsetter of today. Located in Pier Park, you will find one-of-a-kind apparel and accessories to fit any occasion!

**Pier Park 700 Pier Park Drive, (850) 236-9769, ShopWithDejaVu.com**

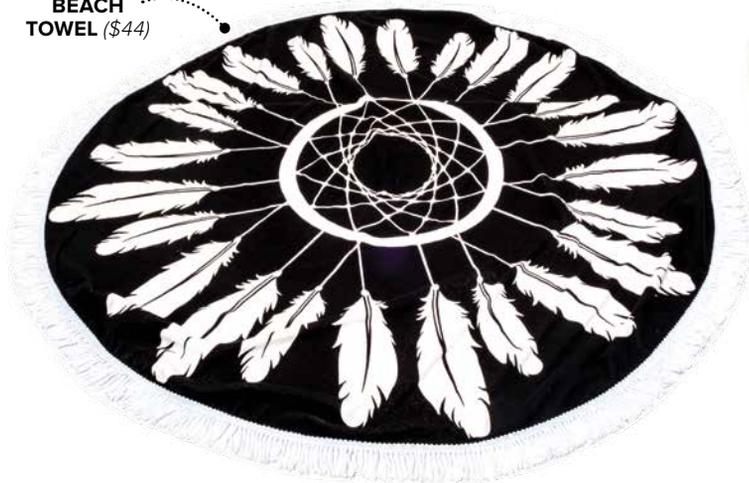
**DEJA VU BRACELETS**  
(\$18–26)

**DEJA VU DRESS**  
(top \$36, bottom \$34)



**BAG** (\$48)

**DEJA VU BEACH TOWEL** (\$44)



**Z&L SANDALS**  
(\$78)





### AFTCO

Known as the American Fishing Tackle Company, Aftco has been providing purpose-built saltwater fishing tackle and outdoor clothing since 1958! All apparel is built to handle the harshest saltwater elements for anglers and ensure sustainable and dependable products no matter the weather. You can find these products locally at Hy's Toggery and Half Hitch Tackle. **Hy's Toggery at Pier Park 700 S. Pier Park Drive #165, (850) 235-1177, HysToggery.com**  
**Half Hitch 2206 Thomas Drive, (850) 234-2621, HalfHitch.com**

### COSTA

When it comes to being on the water, no one offers gear that will have you ready for the open seas quite like Costa Del Mar. Offering a wide range of high quality lifestyle products, from polarized men's and women's sunglasses, to unique apparel and gifts, Costa allows you to really "see what's out there."

**Pier Park 600 Pier Park Drive, (850) 236-9974, CostaDelMar.com**



### UNIVERSITY GIFTS & APPAREL

Need to gear up for college gameday or find that perfect gift for the football fanatic in your life? Head over to University Gifts & Apparel. Here you will find a wide range of gifts and apparel for all of your favorite college teams, including Alabama, Florida State, Florida, LSU and more!

**Pier Park 701 S. Pier Park Drive, (850) 230-8403**

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**Panama City Beach**  
FLORIDA  
REAL. FUN. BEACH.

# REAL FUN BEACH TEES

Maximize your **REAL. FUN. BEACH.** experience sporting the right look with shirts that reflect your fondness for our beach. Stop by the Panama City Beach Visitors Information Center while you're in town, or visit the "Real. Fun. Beach. Store" tab on [VisitPanamaCityBeach.com](http://VisitPanamaCityBeach.com) and you'll have your pick of half-dozen simple, yet sophisticated t-shirt designs that make the perfect souvenir for any real fun beach lover.



# Best Beach Eats

Enjoy a progressive, daylong dining tour

BY KRISTIN LUNA

**RAINY DAY** keeping you indoors? Sunburned and need an afternoon off from the beach? Simply looking for a different way to spend a day? Whatever the reason may be, there are times when kicking it outside all the live long day simply isn't an option. And in a beach town rife in outdoor pursuits, what's a vacationer (or a local) to do? Luckily, Panama City Beach boasts more than 200 restaurants, offering ample opportunities to dine around town.

For those looking to experience a little bit of everything, we pulled together this handy guide. Consider it your progressive dining tour of PCB. Use it wisely and — most importantly — pack your fat pants.



## 9 A.M. THOMAS DONUTS & SNACK SHOP

### Breakfast

This family-owned donut shop has been a PCB staple for more than 40 years, due to its friendly service as well as the dozens of flavors on tap, ranging from red velvet to chocolate maple bacon cake. Conveniently located within a stone's throw of the beach, Thomas Donuts & Snack Shop has a setup primed for large groups or families with myriad outdoor picnic tables dotting the deck (and plenty of shade for those looking to escape the sun's rays).

## 12 P.M. FINN'S ISLAND STYLE GRUB

### Lunch

Finn's open-air, beachfront food truck has held court across from Rick Seltzer Park since 2009 — and it's not going anywhere either, despite being on wheels. The fish from the tacos, bowls

and burritos is as fresh as it comes, and the setting is picture perfect with the beach directly across the street. **Pro tip:** Arrive before the lunch rush to avoid the line that snakes itself out toward Thomas Drive.

## 3 P.M. SERENITY SPA

### Champagne and Massage

OK, so we realize you can't eat all day long (though we won't judge if you try). Instead, break up your meals with a bit of R&R. Sheraton Bay Point Resort recently underwent a \$30 million renovation that also included upgrades to its 12,000-square-foot, on-property spa with its steam room, lounge, sauna and handful of treatment rooms. Book yourself one of the signature spa packages or simply relax in the whirlpool with a glass (or two) of complimentary champagne as you unwind. Just be sure and pack your swimsuit as spa guests also receive access to Reflection's zero-entry pool, which overlooks St. Andrews Bay.

A close-up photograph of a coffee shop counter. In the foreground, a silver portafilter filled with dark coffee grounds sits on a wooden surface. To its right is a white ceramic cup filled with a latte, featuring a green leaf-shaped latte art design. In front of the cup, a small pile of dark coffee beans is scattered. Behind the portafilter, a green pitcher is visible. The background is blurred, showing a coffee shop interior with various equipment and warm lighting.

**1 P.M.**  
**FINN'S BARISTA**  
**BAR & SNACK SHACK**

*Coffee Break*

With all that eating on the docket, you're going to need a java injection to get you through the day or avoid that much-dreaded sugar crash. Lucky for you, next door to its food truck mainstay, Finn's has also added a coffee shop component, which offers smoothies and other healthy treats such as acai bowls. But the specialty concoctions, like the fan favorite black salt mocha, are where Finn's truly shines. For the non-coffee drinkers, there's small-batch kombucha brewed right here in PCB. For those looking to start the nighttime party early, Finn's also has a handful of craft beers on tap.

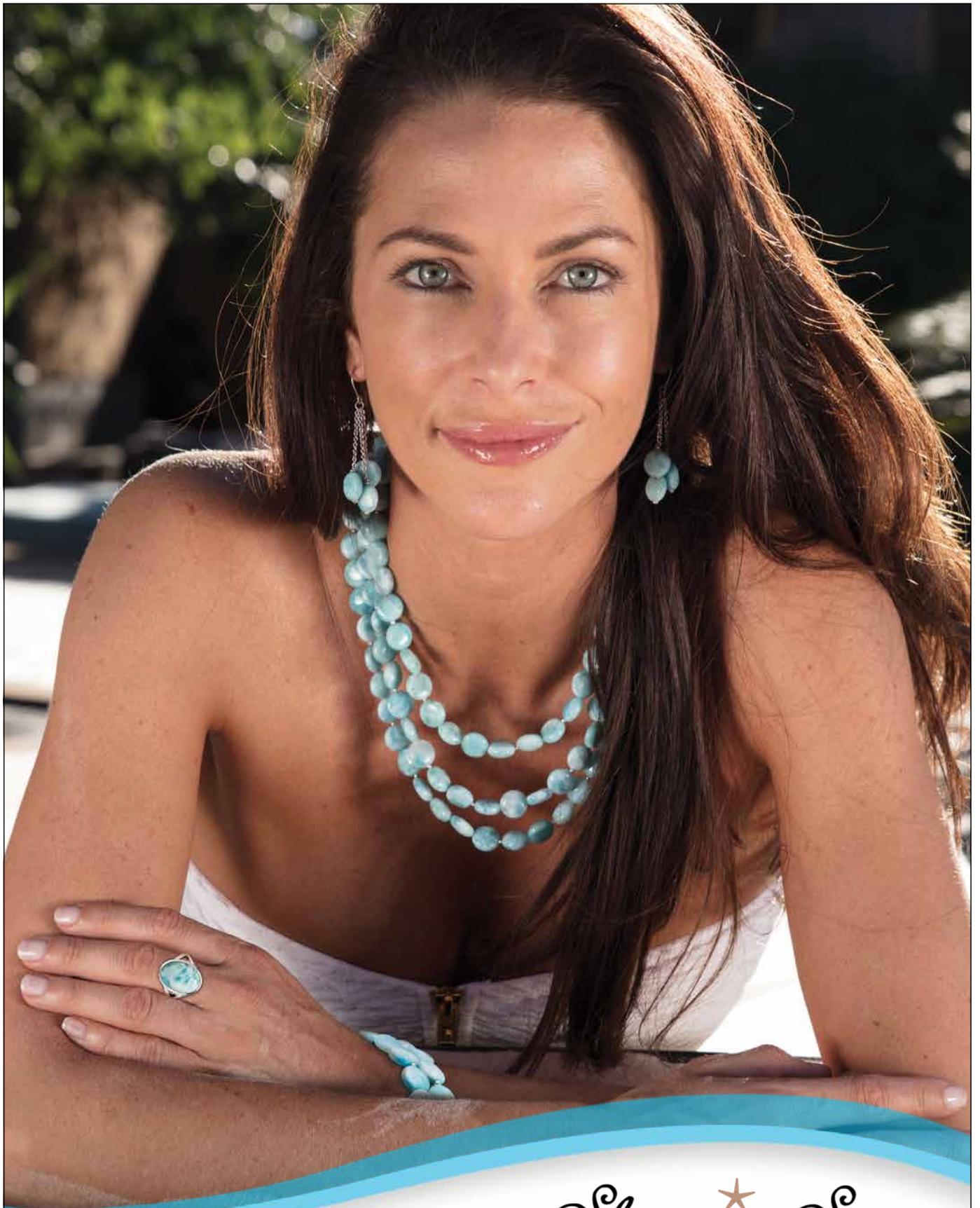


## 6 P.M. NIVOL BREWERY

### *Beers*

Panama City Beach's first brewery is an excellent place to usher in the nighttime as the sun sinks over the Gulf. Opened in summer 2016, the micro-brewery is tucked away in the corner of the Shoppes at Edgewater just off Front Beach Road and offers nearly a dozen of its own brews, in addition to beers and beverages from other producers across the state of Florida. It draws its inspiration from its surrounds with such signature drinks as the Scuba IPA and a 98 Roadside Blonde. The brewery is open daily and a prime pre-dinner stop for a flight of literal local flavor.





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THE RARE CARIBBEAN GEMSTONE

**Shimmering Seas**  
Jewelry & Gifts  
Pier Park - Panama City Beach, FL

# Gear Up Like the Pros



## HALF HITCH

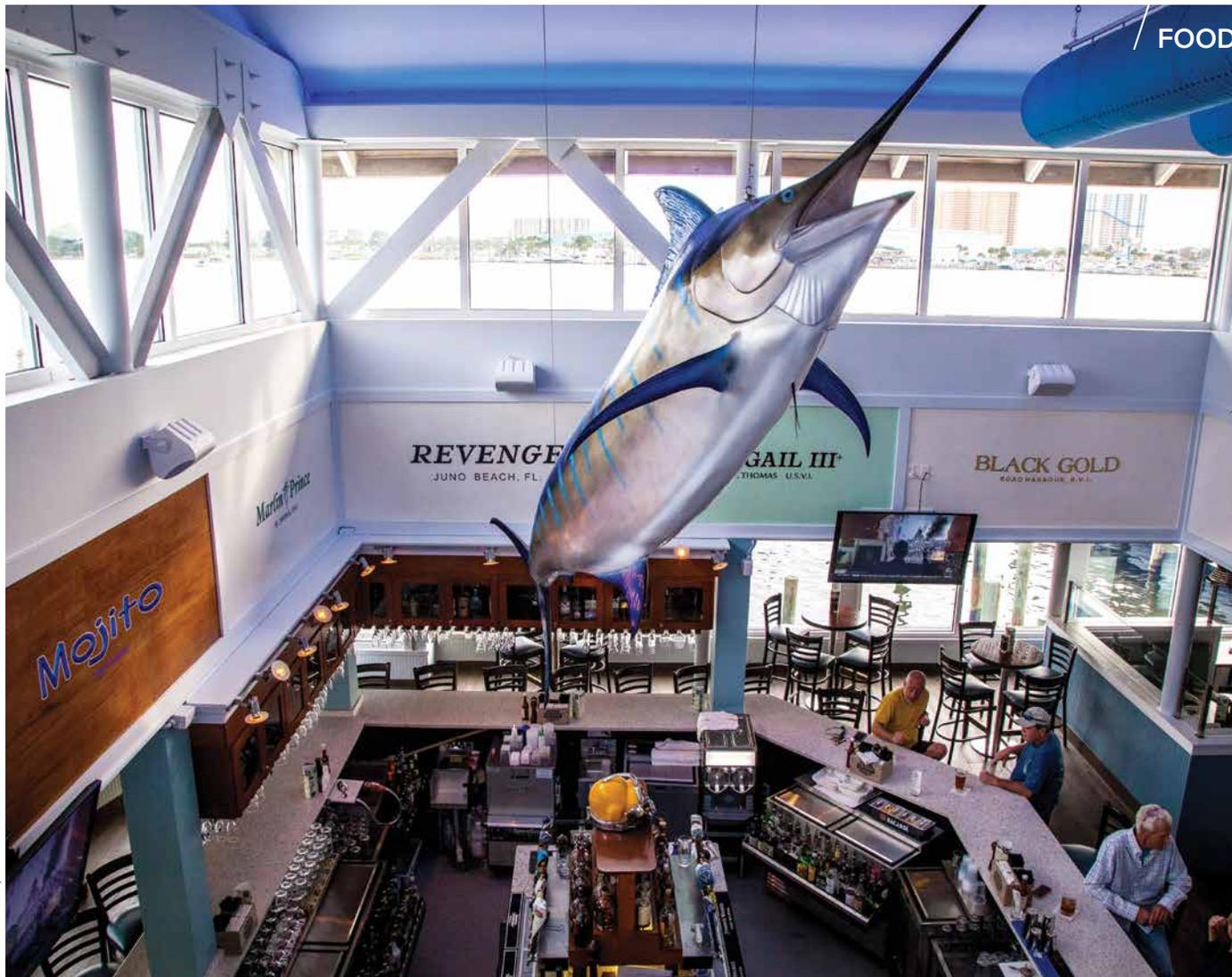


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### *Dinner*

If you've still got room to spare, you won't be disappointed by Grand Lagoon's newest gem, the Grand Marlin, which debuted last year. As its name suggests, seafood is the main star at this waterfront restaurant with a sophisticated dive décor scheme woven throughout. From grouper piccata to BBQ shrimp, tuna tartare to golden tile, this upscale restaurant also has a serious raw bar selection for which diners go wild. Grand Marlin is one of Panama City Beach's finest dining establishments and the perfect way to end a day full of epicurean adventures.

# BARSTOOL QBS

College football faithful gather at local spots to watch teams play

BY THOMAS. J. MONIGAN

**COLLEGE FOOTBALL** can be counted on to draw enormous crowds to gigantic stadiums, but not everyone in Panama City Beach gets to be part of that scene on a regular basis. Those who do not travel to watch games in person still have a way to enjoy Saturday afternoons in the fall season, however. Local groups get together on a regular

basis to eat, drink and cheer while their lads battle it out. ... And they do this by watching television at local sports bars.

## **Emerald Coast Chapter UGA Alumni Association**

President Bill Poteet said that his club's Facebook page has almost 200 members.

"We get a lot of visitors, especially early in the fall," Poteet said. And this will be the fifth year that local Georgia Bulldogs watch their boys play football at Fishale Taphouse & Grill.

"We usually can count on 30 to 40 members; but watching a game on Labor Day, we can get as many as 75 to 100," Poteet said. "We look at Fishale

## **DOGS AND TIGERS**

Fishale, a popular taphouse, hosts gatherings of Georgia and Auburn fans on football Saturdays. Followers of the U.S. Naval Academy football team also come together there.



as a partner. It's gotten to be a pretty big social occasion. Saturday in the fall, we know where we're going to be."

And there are new faces showing up on a regular basis.

"We also get to meet a lot of new people," Poteet said, "because visitors are coming all through the fall. I get e-mails about it every week from somebody who's going to be in town."

Leo and Selma Hill founded Fishale in 2011, and it has become a well-known location for craft beer, some of which is produced at NIVOL Brewery, which the Hills established in early 2016.

"We love our partnership," said manager Chris Pfahl of Fishale. "They're passionate local fans who enjoy football in a family environment. They're a great group of guys and gals who give back to the local community through their philanthropy."

### PC Beach Auburn Football Club

Fishale also hosts to alumni from Auburn and the U.S. Naval Academy, according to Pfahl.

Regarding the restaurant itself, Allison Smith, president of the PC Beach Auburn Football Club said, "They have a great beer selection and plenty of TVs ... so no matter where you sit, you can have a good view. We're looking forward to meeting there again this year."

### Panhandle Gator Club

The Panhandle Gator Club is an affiliate of the university's alumni association, with Paula Pitts serving as president and Mike Varner serving as secretary. There are about 350 members, Varner said, coming from Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson and Washington counties.



CHASE ALEXANDER PHOTOGRAPHY

NIVOL BREWERY

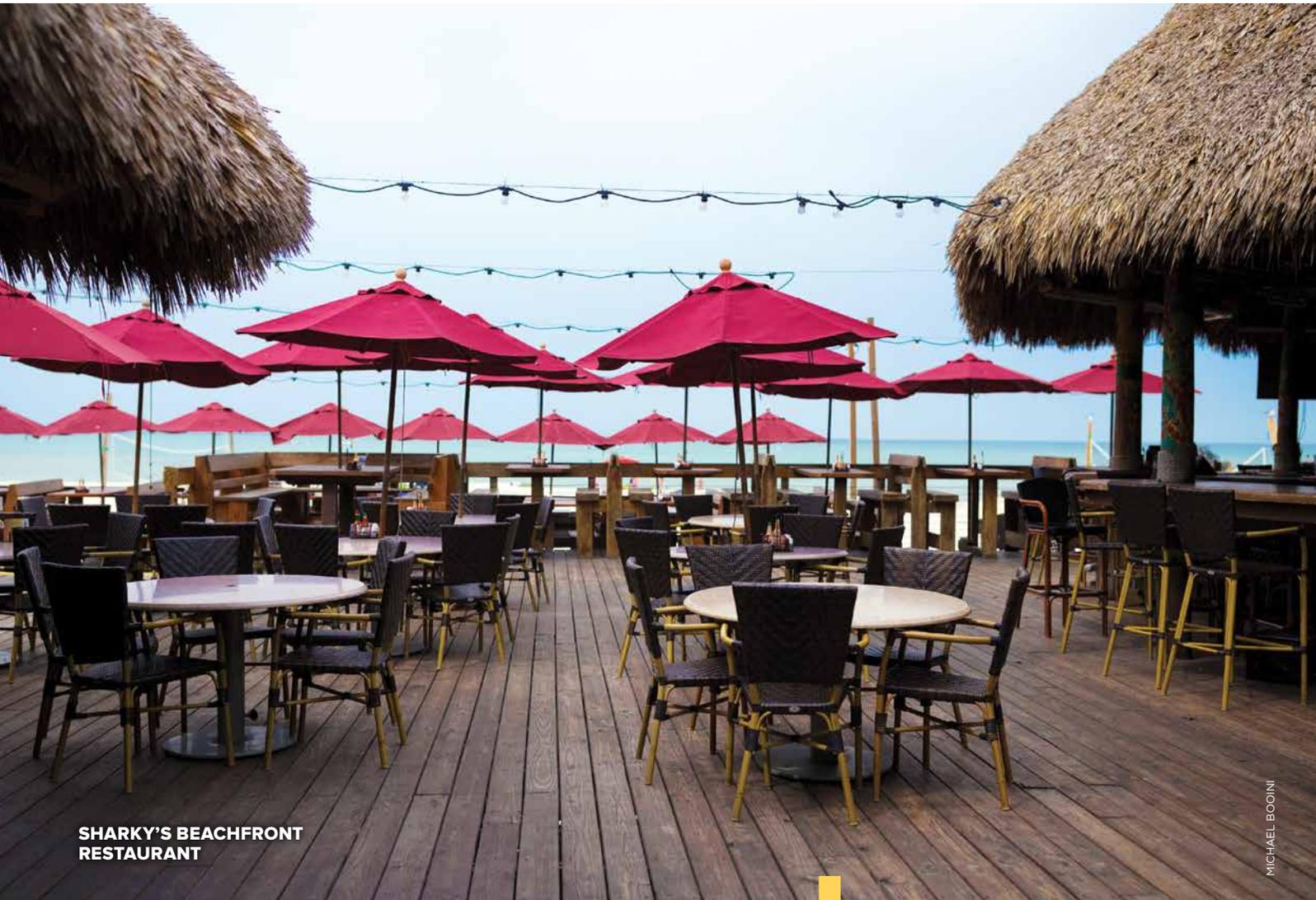


MICHAEL BOONIN

**GOOD CHEER** A college football fan is sure to have a favorite team, but Fishale makes it difficult to commit to only one beer.



MICHAEL BOONIN



SHARKY'S BEACHFRONT RESTAURANT

MICHAEL BOONIN

**“With games like this in the past, we’ve rented chairs on the beach and used an inflatable theater, because 400 seats wasn’t enough. We really enjoy having them here, especially because FSU wins a lot. They’re electrifying on game days.”** — Jeff Friedrich

And when it comes to watching Gators football on TV, the site of choice for the past 10 years has been Beef O’Brady’s Family Sports Pub in Lynn Haven.

“We always have fun,” said Varner. “Anytime a bunch of Gators gets together, you can count on having fun.” Varner also said that number of fans that attend each viewing party varies, depending on the quality of team that UF is playing against. “It can be anywhere from 10 to 40.”

Upcoming viewing parties are posted on Facebook, and e-mails are sent out as reminders. One perk of meeting at Beef O’Brady’s, Varner said, is that “Members get a 10 percent discount on food.”

**Panama City Seminole Club** Club president Connie Warren said that Sharky’s Beachfront Restaurant has been the TV-watching spot for local Seminole fans during the past four years.

## GAME DAY ALTERNATIVES

Panama City Beach features a wide range of places where college football fans can enjoy food, beverages and broadcasts. Among them are:

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1136 Thomas Drive, (850) 238-8802

**PATCHES PUB & GRILL**

4732 Thomas Drive, (850) 233-8879

**PINEAPPLE WILLY’S**

9875 S. Thomas Drive, (850) 235-0928

“We’re so close to Tallahassee, how many come depends on what game it is,” Warren said. “We can get as many as 50 to 75 for bigger games, and the restaurant provides drink specials and food specials.”

Raffles are also held, with Sharky’s gift certificates as prizes.

“We have a lot of fun, and Sharky’s is really good to us,” Warren said. “They’re always helpful to us, and they keep us coming back. It’s the one place on the beach that has accommodated large groups. The opening game with Alabama on Labor Day will be huge there.”

Jeff Friedrich of Sharky’s agreed. “With games like this in the past, we’ve rented chairs on the beach and used an inflatable theater, because 400 seats wasn’t enough,” he said. “We really enjoy having them here, especially because FSU wins a lot. They’re electrifying on game days.” ●



**CHILLIN’** Fans of a feather flock together over beers at preferred locations and don’t relax until their team has iced another victory.

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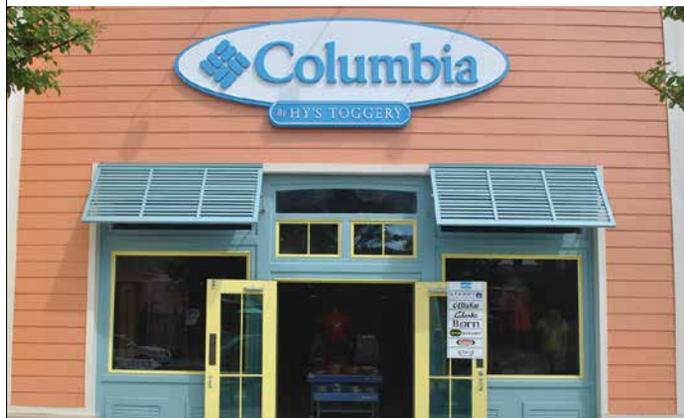
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BACK BEACH BARBECUE

# WHERE THERE'S SMOKE...

With tender fare, BBQ 'joints' cause carnivores to salivate

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

**MUCH LIKE THE HABIT** of referring to all forms of tissue as “Kleenex” or any carbonated beverage as a “Coke,” the word “barbecue” is often considered synonymous with all things related to the al fresco cooking of meat over an open flame. But barbecuing isn't merely throwing a piece of meat on a grill for a few minutes; rather, it's a process that requires patience and skill — not to mention a very keen understanding of how to handle low heat to achieve meat that is tender, moist and flavorful enough to make even the staunchest vegetarians contemplate abandoning their principals to turn carnivorous. And while Panama City Beach may be a coastal town where seafood ranks high on the hit list, it's also one where the “cue is given its due.” Here are a few hotspots that are downright addictive...

## Back Beach Barbecue

Danny and Monica Cosenzi are household names in Rosemary Beach, due to their ownership of the popular Restaurant Paradis; now, the Cosenzis have

brought their skill to the west end of Panama City Beach with their latest venture, Back Beach Barbecue, located in the space formerly occupied by Coram's. Back Beach Barbecue serves comfort food in a laid-back



**HERE'S THE RUB** Chefs at Back Beach Barbecue submit ribs, brisket, pork, sausage, chicken and turkey to a blend of dry spices before smoking meats over locally sourced woods.



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atmosphere. Here, chefs rub their ribs, brisket, pork, sausage, chicken and turkey with a blend of dry spices, and then they smoke the meat over locally sourced wood, at the front of the restaurant.

Guests order their meal from a chalkboard-style menu, right at the counter, and they can watch the chefs slice their meats, too. If you like a little sauce with your barbecue, try the house-made Spicy Three Pepper, Carolina Mustard, House Sauce and Alabama White Sauce — made using Grayton Beer Company’s Beach Permit Blonde Ale. Diners can also choose from any of six home-style sides: macaroni and cheese, pinto beans, collard greens, potato salad, coleslaw and brisket Brunswick stew. Also on the menu are wine and beer options, classic soda options and delicious homemade desserts. Guests receive their meal on butcher paper that is placed on an old-fashioned, school-style cafeteria tray and head for either of the seating areas. Two garage doors provide a fun, open segue between the indoor and outdoor dining spaces.

Back Beach Barbecue is open seven days a week for lunch and dinner. The restaurant also offers catering for private or corporate events, a fully equipped food truck and delivery service. [19714 Panama City Beach Parkway](http://19714PanamaCityBeachParkway.com), (850) 249-0822, [BackBeachBarbecue.com](http://BackBeachBarbecue.com).

### BFE (Best Food Ever!)

When former Marine Richard Dotson decided to put his mastery of meats to good use and open BFE in 2015, he could

have been overselling the food that was smoking up his joint everyday — but the acronym certainly serves him well, and his customers seem to back him up on the claim that his is, indeed, “the best food ever.” They flock to his dining room on the regular to get their fill of everything from the homemade pastrami and brisket that are top-sellers to the tender, smoked pulled pork that he piles on the plate. Using a dry rub during his low-and-slow cooking process, Dotson serves his meats with sauces on the side, allowing the flavor to shine through. If you’re a fan of sauce, try the tangy, creamy, white barbecue sauce, which is house made. Pair your meat with comforting sides like baked beans, potato salad or slaw. Whatever smokes your stack, this is one place to take it all in to enjoy some of the Best. Food. Ever. [6511 Laird Park Road](http://6511LairdParkRoad.com), (850) 708-1458, [Facebook.com/BFE.PCB](https://www.facebook.com/BFE.PCB)

### Billy Bones

Although not actually billed as a barbecue restaurant, the eclectic menu at Billy Bones boasts barbecue dishes so tasty, they’ll shiver your timbers. Since opening in 2016, owners David and Deanna Hollinger have been serving their guests everything from deep-fried peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to burgers, seafood and tacos; and their laid-back, family-friendly restaurant has become a hit for their unique way of doing things. In fact, they’re the only place around with deep-fried ribs.

But if true barbecue is what makes your mouth water, try their dry-rubbed smoked ribs served with a choice of three tasty sauces that will make your taste buds say “Aho!” Or double-fist it with a sandwich loaded with pulled pork and coleslaw. Top sellers range all over the (treasure) map; so if you’re looking for something to satisfy every member of your crew, head to Billy Bones! It’s more than arrrr-right! [10031 Hutchison Boulevard](http://10031HutchisonBoulevard.com), (850) 775-1312, [BillyBonespcb.com](http://BillyBonespcb.com).

### Dickey’s Barbecue Pit

With more than 600 locations nationwide, Dickey’s Barbecue Pit is on the fast track for growth — even though, when it comes to cooking their mouthwatering meats, this place takes things low and slow. Since opening their own franchise in 2015, Frank and Maria Ilderton have been welcoming guests to taste Texas at its very best. Their sizeable menu features favorites like ribs, beef brisket, pulled pork, turkey, chicken, ham, polish sausage and spicy cheddar sausage, all cooked to down-home perfection. This family-friendly joint is welcoming from the very minute you walk in the door, and each customer is greeted with a cheery, “Welcome to Dickey’s!” Daily specials make things even more scrumptious, and the free ice cream is a sweet finish for everyone. From beef to beans and everywhere in between, Dickey’s is one pit you’ll definitely want to hit. [100 Pier Park West](http://100PierParkWest.com), (850) 235-2458, [Dickeys.com](http://Dickeys.com).



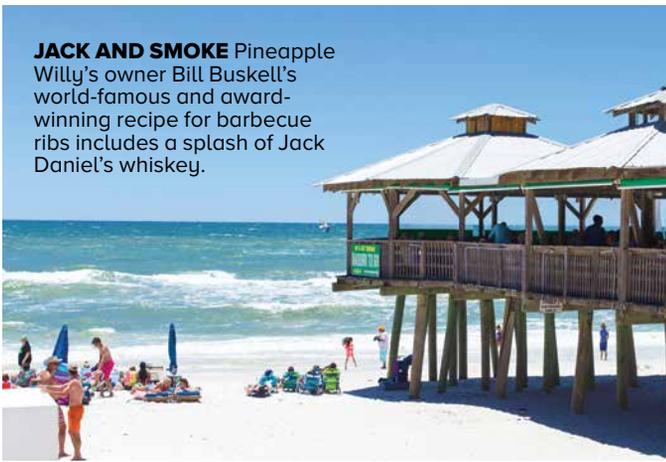
**BEST FOOD EVER**  
While his restaurant has an audacious name, owner Richard Dotson is up to the challenge.

**SURF AND TURF** Folks may arrive at Salty Sue's on Back Beach Road with seafood on their minds, but the hickory smoke that permeates the place often leads them to meatier options.



MICHAEL BOONIN

**JACK AND SMOKE** Pineapple Willy's owner Bill Buskell's world-famous and award-winning recipe for barbecue ribs includes a splash of Jack Daniel's whiskey.



MICHAEL BOONIN

### Moe's Original Bar B Que

The brainchild of three boys from 'Bama who learned from a pitmaster named Moses, Moe's Original Bar B Que is a true taste of the South that socks your mouth with the kind of flavor you can only get from smoke and wood. More than 25 years after the first Moe's opened, the restaurant has become a successful chain of franchises. Determined to show their guests just what makes Moe's such a do when it comes to the 'cue, Will Cassanova and Ryan Helsley fired up their own pit in Panama City Beach in 2014. High on their list of raves-to-crave is the 'Bama-style pulled pork sandwich: a pile of dry-rubbed, succulent pulled pork dressed up with a killer combo of Moe's signature white barbecue sauce and

traditional red barbecue sauce and topped in their addictive marinated slaw and tangy pickles. They go whole hog here, when it comes to letting the meat speak for itself; but the pig isn't the only meat they've mastered: Try their smoked chicken wings, tender ribs and turkey (It's so moist, you'll gobble it down!). With so much to love, Moe's is one pit that's a sure-fire hit. [14896 Front Beach Road, \(850\) 708-1633, MoesOriginalbbq.com.](http://14896FrontBeachRoad.com)

### Pineapple Willy's

Overlooking the Gulf, Pineapple Willy's is a family-friendly joint that serves up a fun mix of tasty foods that combine island flavor with Cajun flare. You'll find fan-favorites on the menu (try the crispy-fried alligator bites and the plump, grilled shrimp) as well as some truly



MICHAEL BOONIN

unique dishes. Jack Daniel's makes an appearance on more than just the restaurant's drink menu; it's a key ingredient in the sauce slathered on their World Famous Barbecue Ribs. The sauce is owner Bill Buskell's ingenious variation on a recipe he found in a Jack Daniel's cookbook (the original was just too intense for general audiences). Altering it just enough, Buskell came up with his award-winning formula that combines a sweet barbecue sauce with a blend of spices, a few doses of Texas Pete hot sauce and a bit of Jack Daniel's. The ribs at Pineapple Willy's are definitely a "can't miss," but the dry rubbed, pit smoked pulled pork is also worth piling on the plate. [9875 S. Thomas Drive, \(850\) 235-0928, PWillys.com.](http://9875.S.ThomasDrive.com)

### Salty Sue's

For nearly a decade, Salty Sue's has been a PCB favorite for everything from seafood and steaks to salads and burgers. But the Knowles family goes whole hog for the 'cue, too, doing it Southern-style. Salty Sue's barbecue dishes include St. Louis-style ribs, injection-marinated chicken and beef brisket. The meat is hickory smoked with a dry rub and is served up sauceless, to highlight the taste of the meat. For those who like things on the saucy side, Salty Sue's homemade sweet and mild, hickory hot and Texas mustard sauces are delicious. There's nothing salty about the way Salty Sue's treats their customers: They serve generous portions in a welcoming atmosphere, where guests are treated like family. Whether you love the catch of

the day or the 'cue, Salty Sue's is sure to satisfy. [17501 Back Beach Road, \(850\) 234-8485, SaltySues.com.](http://17501.BackBeachRoad.com)

### Shane's Rib Shack

Shane's Rib Shack opened its doors back in 2011; since then, franchise owners Chris and Dana Gerkin have been serving up Southern barbecue favorites, such as pulled pork and tender, meaty ribs smoked right on site at their shack of savoriness. Offering best sellers like the Big Dad pulled pork sandwich, chicken fingers and baked potatoes loaded with meat, Shane's piles finger-licking, fall-off-the-bone flavor-to-savor on every plate. Whether pork is your pleasure or beef makes you saucy, this nationwide chain has sandwiches, sides, salads and plates to satisfy. Shane's proves that when

meat is on the menu, chain-smoking can be a good thing. [10100 Hutchison Blvd., \(850\) 249-8111, ShanesRibShack.com.](http://10100.HutchisonBlvd.com)

### Sonny's BBQ

Wayne Lindsey has been doing the founders of the Sonny's franchise proud since 2011. From the Texas-style brisket to the smoked turkey to the Sweet Carolina pulled-pork sandwich heaped with tender pulled pork and topped in coleslaw and tangy mustard sauce, Sonny's pitmasters definitely have their meats mastered. Whether you're a fan of the true Texas barbeque or are sweet on St. Louis-style fare, head over to Sonny's for some 'cue that'll blur the lines and bring everyone together in hog heaven. [11341 Panama City Beach Parkway, \(850\) 230-4742, SonnysBBQ.com.](http://11341.PanamaCityBeachParkway.com) ●



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**AMBUSH POINT** The pass to St. Andrews Bay is a great place to ambush migrating flounder in the fall of the year. Separate populations of flounder migrate from the Gulf to the bay and the bay to the Gulf.

# FISH ON THE MOVE

Cool temperatures spark migrations leading to fast action

BY STEVE BORNHOFT

**TOM PUTNAM** is the product of a passion for fishing and the marine environment. His father, Capt. B.J. Putnam, moved to Panama City Beach from Decatur, Alabama, in 1965 in pursuit of a dream. He had always wanted to be a charter boat captain. He ran boats for years before doctors warned him that it was time to get out of the sun, whereupon he established Half Hitch Tackle. Tom took over the business following Capt. Put's death in 1993. Half Hitch has grown to include six storefronts, three of them in Panama City Beach. All of that means that Tom doesn't spend as much time on the

water as he used to or would like to; but he has learned a lot about fishing through the years — knowledge that he gladly imparts to his customers. For this article, he discussed three reliable, low-cost, fall-of-the-year fishing trips that anglers of all experience levels can enjoy.

## FLOUNDER

In response to falling water temperatures, flounder that spend the summer in the bays head out to the Gulf to spawn, and the Gulf flounder come into the shelter of the bay waters. This adds up to a big movement of fish



**FISH ON!** Both trolling and free lining live baits are effective methods to use when targeting king mackerel. Stout tackle can be a good idea because you never know when you might tie into a large “smoker” king.



that eat along the way. Anglers are wise to focus their efforts at passes, inlets and other choke points. Nearshore wrecks and spots such as even a small barge or a buoy may hold flounder — both fish moving out and those coming into the bays.

**PUTNAM ON FLOUNDER** “Bay flounder usually migrate first, because bay waters cool faster. A flounder is an ambush predator who lies in wait in the sand at the edge of the grass or next to debris, pier pilings or docks and marinas. You may see flounder swimming, but that’s unusual. You’ve got to go to him; he’s not going to come to you. Cast out, drag your bait along the bottom and then cast to a new spot. There is no point in casting multiple times to the same place. Some people like to gig flounder after dark, but I am not

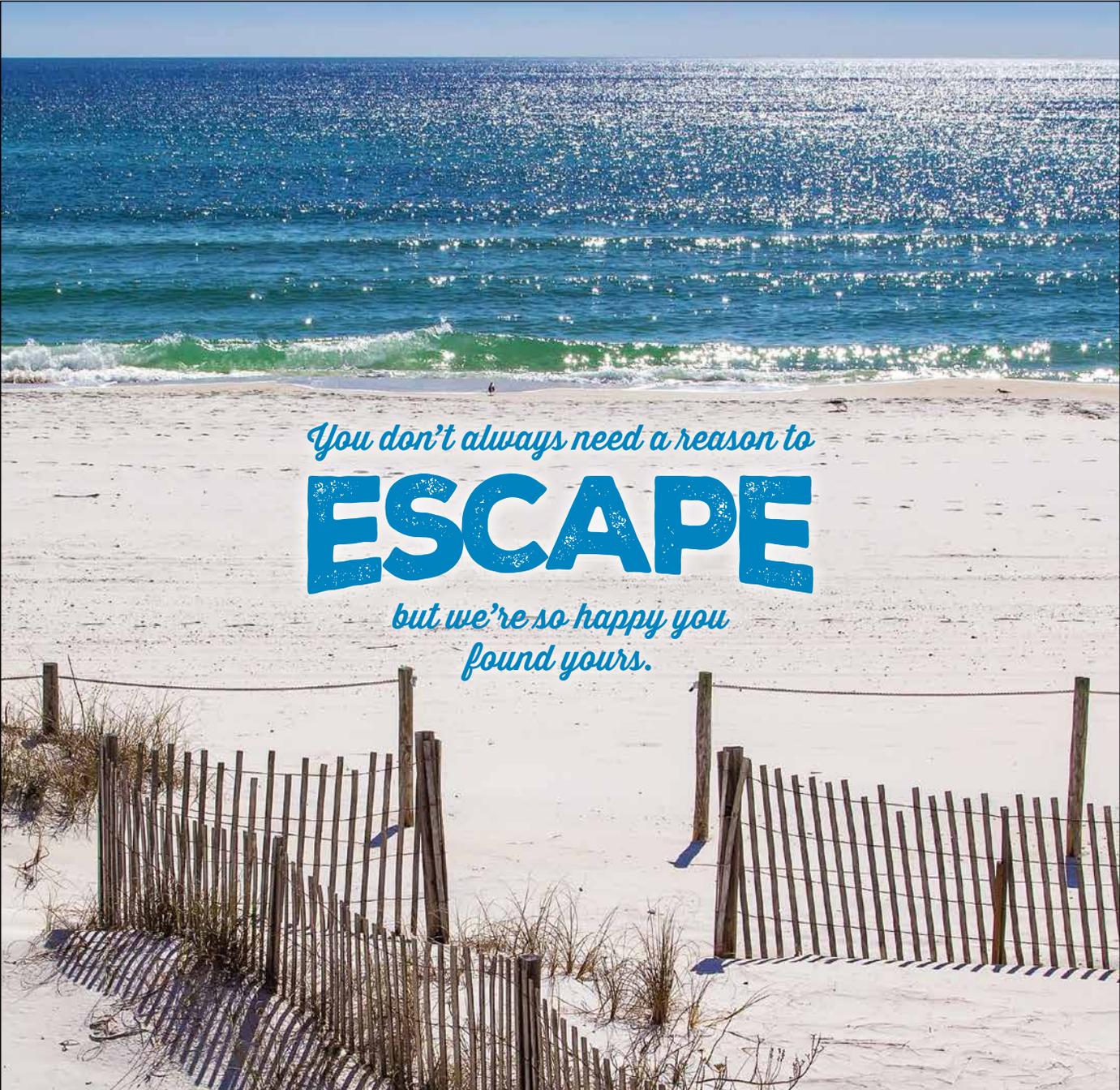
aware that any guides offer gigging trips; that might be a good idea for someone. Live bull minnows fished on Carolina rigs are the preferred bait for flounder. Plastic grubs and soft plastic tails work well, too.”

**KING MACKEREL**

Each fall, king mackerel migrate from west to east along the northern Gulf Coast before heading south for the winter. “Kingfish” tend to be smaller in the fall than earlier in the year, but their numbers are greater. Especially large Spanish mackerel also show up in the fall, and it’s important that anglers be able to distinguish between the two species so as not to run afoul of regulations.

**PUTNAM ON KING MACKEREL** “Kingfish are easy to catch, making them

ideal for fun family fishing. There are lots of ways to fish for them, including free-lining a live bait (using a live bait such as a herring, cigar minnow or hardtail on an unweighted line) and trolling. You don’t have to have any secret spots or special knowledge. Popular lures include Clark spoons, Rapalas and other hard-plastic, minnow-imitating lures. We sell a lot of pink Yo Zuri plugs to mackerel fishermen. Why pink, I don’t know. Fresh king mackerel is great to eat, but because it is an oily fish, it doesn’t freeze well. They are great smoked or in fish dips. The migration is triggered by a drop in water temperature, so its onset may vary depending on the length of the summer. Usually, the fish have departed by November.”



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**MAHI MAHI** Inshore schools of juvenile “chicken” dolphin (or mahi mahi) can make for fast action in October. They may be mixed in with hard-fighting bonito (top of photo).

## CHICKEN DOLPHIN

The fish known as dolphin or mahi-mahi is one of the fastest-growing finbearers in the Gulf of Mexico. Juvenile dolphin show up within a mile of shore during the summer and depart the area, usually, in October. They are frequently found near floating debris or along tidelines. People who announce that they are about to head out to catch some “dolphin” may find themselves entertaining some quizzical looks and questions from people who think that they are referring to mammals rather than fish.

### PUTNAM ON CHICKEN DOLPHIN

“People will say that they had a school of dolphin around the boat, but they couldn’t get them to bite. The key is to feed them and keep them eating. Cut some bait into small pieces or use prepared chum and throw it out to get them going. When you catch one, leave him in the water and, as you drift along, others will stay with him. You can cast or troll for dolphin with spoons, plugs or cigar minnows. Casting is the most fun. The water is clear in the fall, and you can see the fish bite. Dolphin are brilliantly colored and jump a lot. They are great fun on light, spinning tackle, and they are fine eating.” ●

## LOOKING FOR A GUIDE?

Putnam recommends the light-tackle specialists who make up the Panama City Inshore guide service: Justin Leake, Matt Smith and Steve Bachman. Check out their website at [panamacityinshore.com](http://panamacityinshore.com); reach them by phone at (850) 258-7780 or ask for them at Sun Harbor Marina, located just east of the Hathaway Bridge in Panama City.

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Sign up to receive alerts for flag changes by texting **FLAG** to **313131**.

 **GREEN – LOW HAZARD**  
Calm conditions, exercise caution

 **YELLOW – MEDIUM HAZARD**  
Moderate surf and/or currents

 **RED – HIGH HAZARD**  
High surf and/or strong currents

 **RED OVER RED**  
Water closed to public

 **PURPLE**  
Dangerous marine life

# LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS

Together, we can keep our beaches pristine

**PANAMA CITY BEACH** is known for having the “World’s Most Beautiful Beaches,” and we would like to keep it that way for the enjoyment of locals and tourists alike! For this reason, the “Leave No Trace” ordinance was adopted in 2012. Anything you bring to the beach should also leave the beach with you. Anything left on the beach overnight could be cleared off the beach by the time you return in the morning. Our goal is to protect our pristine beaches and the natural wildlife, such as nesting sea

turtles, by leaving no trace of personal items on the beaches overnight. Please do your part in maintaining our beautiful beaches!

The Leave No Trace ordinance states that all personal items will be removed and disposed of if left on the beach between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. These items include, but are not limited to, tents, chairs, toys, umbrellas and coolers. On public beaches or with the upland landowner’s permission, beachgoers may store personal belongings overnight at the toe of the

dune. The toe of the dune is the area of the beach immediately seaward of the dune and beach vegetation. To be specific, it is the area of the beach that is furthest from the water that is not in a sand dune or beach access point.

Those who store their personal items overnight do so at their own risk. The county, the city, the Tourist Development Council and the beach maintenance contractor do not assume any liability for any items left on the beach.



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# SHARE YOUR FUN!

**A GREAT PHOTO IS** all about being in the right place at the right time – in Panama City Beach, the right time is just about any time, so if you capture a great vacation photo you'd like to share with us, post it to Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter with the hashtag #RealFunBeach, or email it to us at [social@visitpanamacitybeach.com](mailto:social@visitpanamacitybeach.com). Your photo might even be selected to appear in Visit Panama City Beach magazine (with your permission, of course)!



Post your Panama City Beach photos on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook with the hashtag #RealFunBeach, and they might just end up featured here in the next issue! (We'll contact you to ask permission first, of course!)



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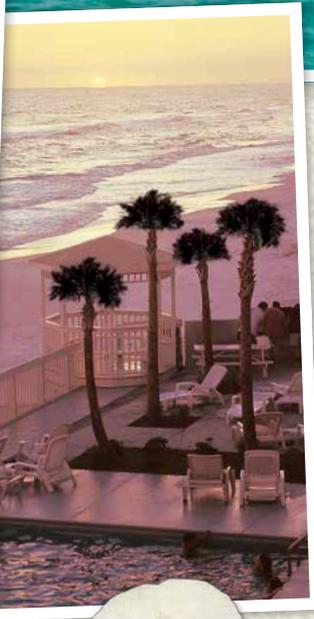
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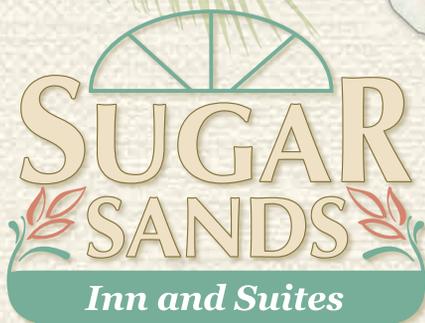
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