



FACT SHEET

Panama City Beach Eco-Adventure Persona

OVERVIEW

Panama City Beach (www.visitpanamacitybeach.com) is located in Bay County, Fla., in the Northwest part of the state. The destination is best known for its 27 miles of white-sand beaches edging emerald-green waters where the Gulf of Mexico and St. Andrew Bay converge. With an average of 320 days of sunshine annually, a beach like no other and nature all around, the region has long been favored by travelers seeking an ecologically responsible, fun-filled adventure.

Panama City Beach has a surprising number of low-impact ways to experience nature above and below the water, from exploring Shell Island – a pristine, undeveloped seven-mile island – to swimming in the world’s highest concentrations of bottlenose dolphins. In addition to its 27 miles of world-famous beaches, the destination boasts of two state parks – St. Andrews and Camp Helen –featuring miles of on- and off-road hiking and biking trails in protected conservation areas. Offering explorers the chance to truly be one with nature, these state parks showcase the natural beauty of Florida in its most natural habitat. Visitors can also enjoy the water and spot the vibrant, underwater ecosystem by swimming, kayaking, paddleboarding or snorkeling. For the brave eco-warriors out there, St. Andrews provides a truly stunning view of the night sky at its RV and tent camp sites.

Panama City Beach also offers unique voluntourism opportunities to its visitors, including participating in a coastal cleanup at Camp Helen State Park, helping neighboring Mexico Beach still recovering from Hurricane Michael’s devastating impact, adopting a sea turtle or taking a deep dive in the clear, emerald green waters to explore first-hand the Bay County Artificial Reef Association’s work. Panama City Beach guests can give back and help preserve the environment all while enjoying the breathtaking natural beauty surrounding them.

ACTIVITIES

Beaches

- **St. Andrew’s State Park Beach**

[St. Andrews State Park](#) is consistently one of the most popular and most visited state parks in Florida. Situated on a peninsula at the far eastern edge of Panama City Beach, the beach is bordered by the Gulf of Mexico to the south, the St. Andrews Pass to the east and the Grand Lagoon to the north. Snorkeling and scuba diving along the jetties is a popular pastime for many as an array of brightly colored marine life can be found not far beneath the surface. Swimming and surfing are popular on the Gulf side of the state park, while those in search of calmer waters can enjoy the "kiddie pool," a large area along the pass that's protected by the jetties.

- **Shell Island Beach**

Located just across the pass from St. Andrews State Park, [Shell Island](#) is an undeveloped seven-mile island of white sand, emerald water and beautiful

pine forest. It's perfect for a picnic, walk on the beach or snorkeling adventure. Sightseeing trips, private charters, boat rentals and an hourly shuttle service make the barrier island accessible to families who want to really get away from it all. The water surrounding Shell Island is also home to the world's highest concentration of bottlenose dolphins, a breathtaking sight to experience both from the water and from shore.

- **Camp St. Helen State Park Beach**
This often-overlooked ecological gem sits on the far western border of Panama City Beach, just over the Phillips Inlet Bridge and close to the border of Walton County. Offering pristine beaches, excellent trails that wind through dunes and scrub oak forests, and a rare dune lake, [Camp Helen State Park](#) is truly one of Florida's most special state parks.
- **Doggie Beach (Pet-Friendly)**
Furry friends are welcome as part of the family in Panama City Beach, and Doggie Beach is located across from Pier Park and west of the City Pier. The 400-foot beach is open to dogs on leashes, and they love strolling the beach and enjoying the waves.

Eco-friendly Water Activities

- **Deep Dive the “Wreck Diving Capital of the South”**
Known for some of the best shipwreck diving on the Gulf Coast, Panama City Beach is a premier diving destination for both beginner and advanced divers. Guests can become scuba certified with [Dive Locker](#) and discover hidden, underwater treasures, including the destination's newest artificial reef, the former [El Dorado Cruise Liner](#). Whatever a person's level of diving experience, the ideal underwater adventure awaits as divers will get up close and personal with octopus, grouper and other colorful wildlife that frequent these waters.
- **Snorkeling Adventure**
For those who don't have their diving certification, snorkeling off the coast of the secluded Shell Island is the perfect way to explore Panama City Beach's crystal clear emerald green waters. An undeveloped seven-mile stretch of white sand, Shell Island is located just across the pass from St. Andrews State Park. The waters between the island and the mainland also happen to be home to one of the world's highest concentrations of bottle-nose dolphins.
- **Paddleboard & Kayak Rentals**
Beach lovers can surf the waves via paddleboard on Panama City Beach's protected and open waters like the [Grand Lagoon](#), St. Andrews Bay and various cold springs, rivers and lakes in the region. While paddleboarding, guests can spy rays, fish, sea turtles, dolphin and other wildlife beneath the water's surface. Equipment is easily rented from [The Boardroom](#) and for the especially brave and well balanced, paddleboard yoga is available at [Yoga Elements](#).
- **Fishing – Pier, Beach, Kayak, Paddleboard or Boat**
The crystal-clear depths of Panama City Beach's sandy shores are home to a vast array of wildlife for both inshore and offshore fishing. Whether anglers are looking for an exciting deep-sea fishing, catch and release experience in the Gulf of Mexico or just sitting on a pier at St. Andrews Bay, they will be delighted to enjoy the diverse salt and freshwater options in the region. Fishing adventures abound in Panama City Beach, so much so that the award-winning “Chasin’ The Sun” TV show takes place in the region.

Eco-friendly Land Activities

- **Biking, Hiking and Walking Trails**
[Conservation Park](#) offers 12 looping trails ranging from 0.6 to 11 miles for walking, biking, wildlife and bird watching. In addition, St. Andrews State Park, consistently one of the most popular and most visited state parks in Florida, offers guest the chance to walk, hike or bike and see an amazing variety of wildlife, from migratory birds to deer to even alligators. One of Panama City Beach's newest trail systems, [Gayle's Trails](#), is also growing to span the entire island of Panama City Beach, so far connecting Frank Brown Park to Conservation Park.
- **Panama City Beach Sports Complex**
The brand-new \$37 million [Panama City Beach Sports Complex](#) offers sport enthusiasts on 'play-cation' a place to enjoy multiple sports and activities on its 13-field complex. Featuring nine turf fields, four natural grass fields, dedicated tournament buildings, two championship fields with seating up to 1,500 and over 1,000 parking spots, the complex allows for soccer, lacrosse, rugby, football, baseball, softball and more.
- **Golf**
Home to four championship courses, 320 days of sunshine a year and an average temperature of 74 degrees, Panama City Beach is the ideal location for golf-lovers to enjoy the greens. The Bay Point Golf Club at Sheraton Bay Point Resort is home to the only Nicklaus Design course in Northwest Florida.

Voluntourism Events & Activities

- **“Stay It Forward” – Panama City Beach’s Brand-New Voluntourism Offering**
In the wake of the one-year anniversary of Category 5 Hurricane Michael devastating the surrounding areas, Panama City Beach is now offering vacationers the opportunity to lend a helping hand with the brand-new “Stay It Forward” voluntourism offering, unique to Bay County. This package reinvents the meaning of vacation by giving guests the opportunity to assist neighboring Mexico Beach with cleanup, planting sea oats on sand dunes, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity and more, all while enjoying the very best of Panama City Beach. Each month, Panama City Beach is organizing a specific “Stay It Forward” day when visitors can sign up to participate, with travel to Mexico Beach provided and cleanup activities planned throughout the day. Visitors and groups interested in the offering at another time can reach out to the CVB directly to schedule.
- **Participate in “International Coastal Cleanup Day”**
Participate in the Ocean Conservancy's annual International Coastal Cleanup Day at Camp Helen State Park. Sponsored in coordination with the Lake Powell Community Alliance, this special event has led to the removal of over 20,000 pounds of trash from Lake Powell and its watershed. Participants can even bring their own boat, canoe, kayak or paddleboard and join the armada of cleanup crews. Supplies including vinyl gloves, garbage bags, data cards, coffee, donuts and water will be provided. Stay tuned for 2020 dates.

ACCOMODATIONS

From environmentally friendly, luxury resorts to beachfront home rentals to camp sites, Panama City Beach has endless accommodations for every type of ecotourist.

With the Gulf of Mexico as their backyard, guests can fall asleep and wake up to the sound of waves, step onto the warm sand first thing in the morning and even go for an evening swim.

Camping:

With over 176 camp sites to choose from, St. Andrews State Park is a camper's dream. These sites offer electricity, water, bathrooms, laundry facilities, Wi-Fi, picnic tables and grills, accommodating both tents and RVs up to 40 feet in length. The park also has a "primitive" camping area equipped with water, a portable toilet, fire ring, and picnic tables for scouts, faith-based groups, and other small, non-profit organized groups. For more information on camping opportunities in Panama City Beach, click [here](#).

Eco-Friendly Accommodations

Panama City Beach offers multiple eco-friendly accommodations from Beach Houses and Townhomes to luxurious resorts. To see a full list of accommodations, click [here](#).

DINING

Known as the "Seafood Capital of the South," Panama City Beach offers an array of dining options including local, fresh and responsibly sourced fare for all types of dietary preferences and restrictions. Organic, vegetarian and even vegan meals are readily available at the destinations' award-winning restaurants, casual beachfront cafes and family-friendly tables. Panama City Beach's restaurants care about where our food comes from and how it affects the planet.

- [Zen Garden Market](#) – A community of local businesses, focusing on providing customers with organic, locally sourced food, coffee and sundries.
- [Wild. Root](#) – Delicious coffee and tea.
- [Lotus Cafe and Juice Bar](#) – Offers mouthwatering smoothies and fresh squeezed juices. The Morning Meditation, made with almond milk, cacao, banana and coffee, is a perfect way to start a fun-filled day at the beach. They also serve lunch daily offering a wide variety of salads, sandwiches, wraps and tacos, with a full dinner menu Thursday through Sunday.
- [FINNS Island Style Grub](#) – Known for their fresh fish and vegetarian tacos, their mission is to keep it small, fresh and simple. They embrace the outdoors; take pride in everything they cook and focus on quality and consistency. There are no fryers or microwaves, just a grill and an oven.
- [Capt. Anderson's Restaurant & Waterfront Market](#) – Features daily, fresh fish specials in both the restaurant and in the market. In business since 1967, Captain Anderson's Restaurant has been named among America's Top 50 Restaurants and made the Restaurant Hall of Fame in 2005. The owners of this establishment work with local fishermen to ensure that the freshest local seafood is being served every day.
- [Seafood Markets](#) – Panama City Beach's proximity to the Gulf of Mexico assures access to the freshest seafood. Visitors and locals alike can find the ideal ingredients at the fresh catch markets. Want the perfect lunch or dinner to compliment an outing to the beach? Panama City Beach's seafood markets offer a delicious variety of fish and shellfish prepared just the way you like it. Spent the day fishing in the Grand Lagoon or deep-sea fishing in the Gulf? The markets can prepare, store or ship your catch to a location of your choosing.

ACCESSIBILITY

Daily commercial air service is provided through Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport, just 15 minutes from the beach. Leading low fare carrier Southwest Airlines operates daily flights through the airport non-stop from Baltimore, Houston, Austin, Chicago and Nashville. Delta Airlines operates non-stop flights from Atlanta. United Airlines offers direct flights to their international hub in Houston. Florida's Intracoastal Waterway and the Gulf of Mexico bring boaters to the area's many marinas, and the destination is within a six-hour drive to major Southeastern cities including Atlanta, Birmingham, New Orleans, and others.

ADDRESS:

Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau
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WEBSITE:

www.visitpanamacitybeach.com

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