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the island guide



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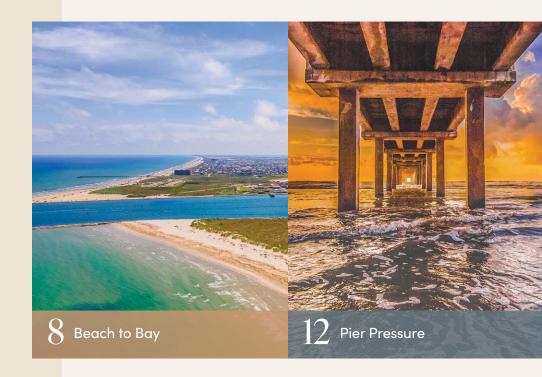
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BeachBay

Mustang Island is a long, thin strip of paradise. On one side, the barrier island has 18 miles of uninterrupted, drivable beach. But for all the beauty of the beach, you don't want to neglect the other side of the island. The ship channel and bays on the other side of the island are where dolphins play, where Redfish bite at lines, and where a ferry boat transports you through the portal to your vacation.

On the tip of it all lies the town of Port Aransas.



At the nexus of the beach and the bay, an endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle bobs between the jetty rocks. Migratory birds soar from those same rocks over to Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, where they chatter with other species visiting for the season. Parasail over the water and spot anglers reeling in their catch and families frolicking in the sand.

In between, on the land, you'll find world-class dining, beach-ready golf carts, and a home away from home.

In Port Aransas, you don't only get the beach experience. Here, you have the "beach" of both worlds. A true break from it all is tucked away on this barrier island. Now that you have the high angle view, it's time for you to get to know all of the "in-between." Zoom into these pages and take a deep dive into why you should make Port Aransas your next beach vacation.

Are you ready to dive into the True Texas Coast?



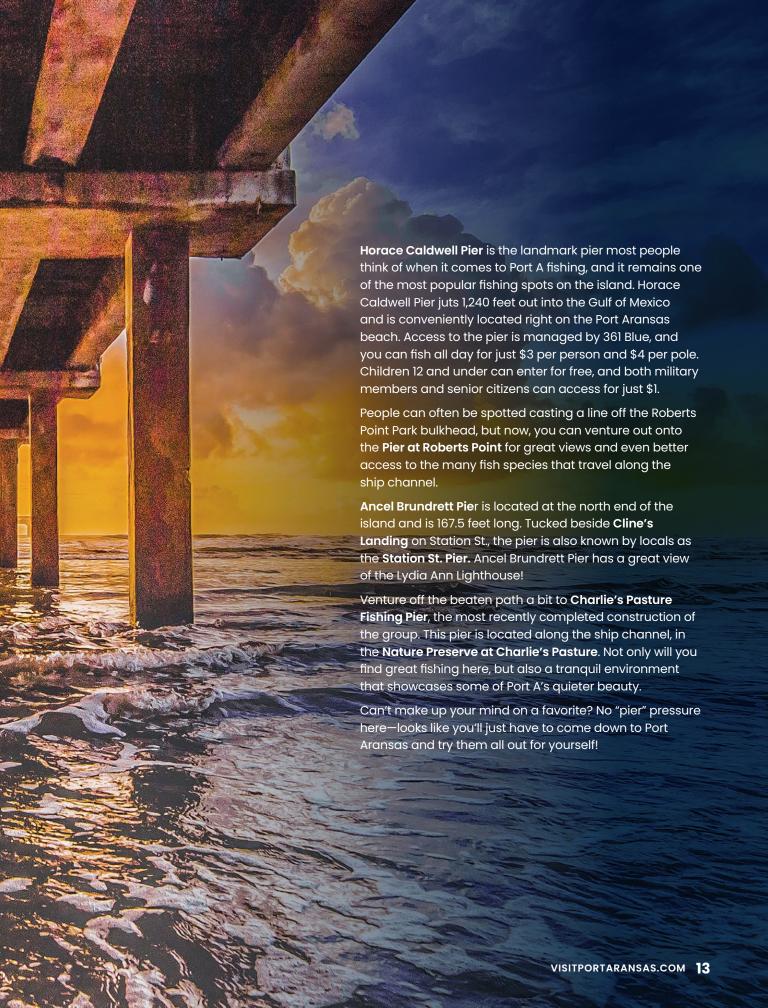
Salt Sof the Sof the

The "lure" of Port A fishing is not just in the species you can catch (though you can catch everything from Red Snapper to Tarpon), or the variety of fishing you can do (though that spans everything from deep sea to fly fishing to crabbing), but also in the history of the sport here in the Fishing Capital of Texas.

Salty runs deep in this town, and you'll get a taste out on the piers, out on the boat with a Port A fishing guide, and even in the very cast of your line.







ALTERNATIVE FISHING

Get Outside The Box To Fill The Box

When you think of Port Aransas fishing, you probably think of record-breaking deep sea catches and the serenity you've felt out on the water with a pole in your hand. But did you know there are other ways to fill your box in Port A than casting a line from a boat or heading offshore? When you're ready to challenge yourself, or just want to try something new, make sure to check out these alternative fishing options!

NET CASTING Throw the right net at the right time in Port Aransas and you can haul in crabs and bait fish for your big boat trip out...but knowing the right net and the right time requires a very particular set of skills. Lucky for you, those skills are readily available to you with the charter of a local guide!

FLOUNDER GIGGING

Captain Matthew with Walker's Guide Service or Captain Dave with Surrender at Sunrise are the experts you'll want by your side as you venture into the night for your first flounder gigging trip. Though you can flounder most of the year, the cooler seasons make the catches even better!

FLY FISHING

Ready to challenge yourself to learn a new skill? Call Kenjo Fly Fishing Charters for a lesson in fly fishing the saltwater flats. Captain Kenjo specializes in utilizing sight-casting techniques with technical spot 'n stalk methods that will ensure you catch your limit!

CRABBING

When you crave a fresh, succulent crab leg, skip the restaurant wait and catch your own! Island Tackle is the go-to spot for all your crabbing supplies—crab buckets, traps, rings, line, gloves, and tongs. You name it, they've got it!

KAYAK FISHING

Enjoy a more intimate fishing experience from the back of a kayak. **Coastal Bend Kayak** will not only rent you a kayak, but will also guide you on a paddle out to the spots where you can reel in trophy-size Redfish, Speckled Trout, Black Drum, and more.







Tarpon, TEXAS

If you have any confusion about why Port Aransas is called the Fishing Capital of Texas, learning the history of sportfishing in the area will clear it right up. In the late 1800s, the sheer number of Tarpon fish caught in these waters gave the town the moniker of Tarpon, Texas. The town didn't become Port Aransas until 1911.

The town's abundance of these "silver kings" attracted fishing enthusiasts from all over the nation, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Tarpon craze also led to the creation of the Farley Boat, boats designed by locals specifically to catch the fish in Gulf waters. Soon, Port Aransas anglers were casting reels from boats, piers, and even

right on the beach. They found they were reeling in everything from Blue Marlin to Red Snapper.

In 1932, the elusive Tarpon even spurred the creation of one of the oldest fishing tournaments in the nation, the Tarpon Rodeo. Now called the Deep Sea Roundup and expanded to encompass

a variety of pelagic fish, that same tournament is proudly nearing its centennial celebration. The "everyman" vibe of the Deep Sea Roundup, and the tournament's Piggy Perch competition for junior anglers, ensure future generations of anglers will enjoy the fishing culture of Port Aransas.

Port Aransas is now home to more than 20 fishing tournaments throughout the year, which range from women's-only tournaments like the Texas Women Anglers Tournament to elite, high-dollar competitions like the Billfish Pachanga.

"These histories live on in the living, breathing fishing community on the island, but also in the Port Aransas Museum, who provided these photos. The museum's collection enables newcomers to get a feel for the shoes (or boats) they're stepping into."



While the trophy bears her husband's name, Totsy Millican was actually the winner with this prize tarpon in 1932. At the time, women weren't allowed to win, so Mrs. Millican stepped aside—but just for the trophy.



By 1911, with the final nail in a post office sign, the town's moniker had changed to Port Aransas...but the spirit of Tarpon, Texas lives on. Marinas like Deep Sea Headquarters, Port Aransas Fisherman's Wharf, and Dolphin **Dock** proudly carry on the legacy by hosting daily bay and offshore fishing trips.

Amateur and professional anglers alike can cast a line from their boats and feel the same thrill of the anglers who landed a fish in Tarpon in the early 1900s. Local fishing guides continue to tell the stories of the boatmen who came before them. They motor out every day and know that the love of fishing they instill in their clients is a gift they get to pass on. And though today a Tarpon catch is rarer and works on a catch-and-release system, the scale of one is just as much a badge of honor now as it was in the town known as Tarpon.

Port Aransas is a destination town that carries hundreds, even thousands, of years of fishing history. So, the next time you hop on a charter boat and reel in a catch, take a moment to remember Tarpon, Texas.





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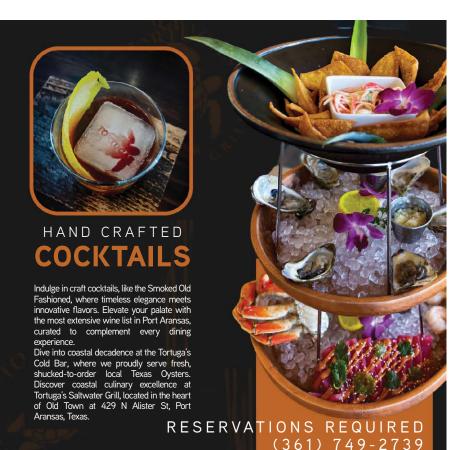
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Michele Lorette 361-947-1113

Broker Associate

I have been involved in the building and development business in Port Aransas for over 19 years, which gives me a clear understanding and appreciation of the local real estate market. I understand the market trends and will provide expert insights to ensure you make informed decisions. Whether you're seeking a vacation home, investment property, or permanent residence, let's work together to turn your aspirations into reality.

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Word of MOUTH

Alex Porter is a fishing guide in Port Aransas who has had his captain's license for 45 years and owns "Alex Porter's Guide Service." Here you can read, in his own words, what it's like to be a fishing guide in Port Aransas.

Tell us about your history with Port A.

"I started coming out to Port Aransas when I was about 13 years old. I had an older brother that lived out here, and I'd hitchhike out from Corpus [Christi] and I fished on the weekends. In the summertime, I stayed with my brother and fished on charter boats and ended up on a private boat when I was 16.

I worked for Brown Oil Tools. Doyle Marek was my captain, that they named the [Port Aransas High School] gym after. Doyle Marek named me Heyboy. It's one word, Heyboy. And people still call me Heyboy to this day.

My first trip to Mexico was in 1976...that was my first trip across the Gulf. I've been across the Gulf probably 70 times, making deliveries from here to Isla Mujeres [and] Cozumel. There's not a port between here and Key West that I haven't

My graduating year was 1976, and it just went downhill from there. I retired right out of high school and started fishing."

When did you learn to fish?

"I fished when I was just a pup. We lived out in Annaville when I was like eight, nine, ten years old. My dad had a little tackle store, and I raised my own grubs and night crawlers. I've been fishing a long time."

What's your favorite fish tale?

"I had a little boy in the boat one morning. He said, 'I just want to catch a blowfish.' And I said, 'Well, we usually don't catch blowfish.' And dang if he didn't. I said, 'You're not going to believe what this is.' [He said] 'What is it, Captain? What is it, Captain?' 'It's a blowfish.' He was able to do it, to get his blowfish.

I had a guy on the boat one day. He said, 'I just want to catch a bull shark.' And I said, 'You know...where we're fishing right now, there's usually not any bull shark down here.' Sure enough."

What do you think is the key to being a good fisherman?

"Patience. You've got to have patience. Don't tool it out and just reel it back in. Let it sit."

If a visitor is coming down to Port A and they're going to have one "can't miss" fishing experience, what would you recommend?

"It just depends if they're seaworthy or not. I mean, going offshore from the first of June until, gosh, they gave us almost 90 days this last time. Snapper fishing is really good. If they're kind of land lovers, the bay is the perfect thing for them. You won't get sick in the bay. Well, I say you won't get sick...depends on what you had the night before."





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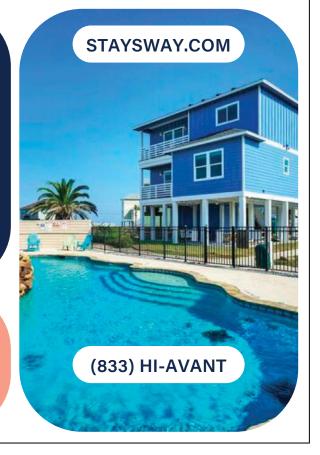
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The stories of the Port A visitor are richly varied in origin and experience, but there is a common thread that connects them all. Once you make your way to these shores, you'll yearn to make Port Aransas your family's tradition.

Over and over again, stories emerge of visitors who have been coming to this beach for as long as they can remember. When asked where the tradition started, they point to their parents or grandparents who came before them, armed with fishing poles and beach towels.

Perhaps you're one of those legacy visitors, or perhaps you're looking to start your own tradition where you can be the first in a long line of those who call Port A their safe, happy harbor.

The Hawkins family has one of those stories. Native to the San Antonio area, the family has long since made the island a home away from home. Lisa Hawkins explains, "My aunt got a place in Port A when I was little, and my grandmother took me...Then my parents and I came for all the spring breaks in high school." She adds, "It's my favorite place."





"My aunt got a place in Port A when I was little, and my grandmother took me...Then my parents and I came for all the spring breaks in high school." She adds, "It's my favorite place."

From that first visit as a child, Hawkins remembers, "the accessibility of the beach. You can just drive right on it. That smell of the air. I just thought—sand in my toes—this is the greatest day ever."

After that first visit, Hawkins and the rest of her family were hooked. On repeat visits, the family stayed in rentals like Coral Cay Condominiums and a variety of beach houses. After a while, they decided to make their love for the island permanent by investing in their own island home. They never looked back, and now a vacation is just a quick drive away.

Because of this, Hawkins' three daughters, now all in their twenties, also grew up combing the beaches of Port Aransas during summers, holidays, and weekends.

Some of the family's fondest memories have been on these shores, from the mind-boggling snow on the beach in 2017 to countless Easters, Christmas holidays, and Independence Days spent out on the water looking up at the fireworks. "The Fourth of July on a boat is to be experienced," Hawkins says.

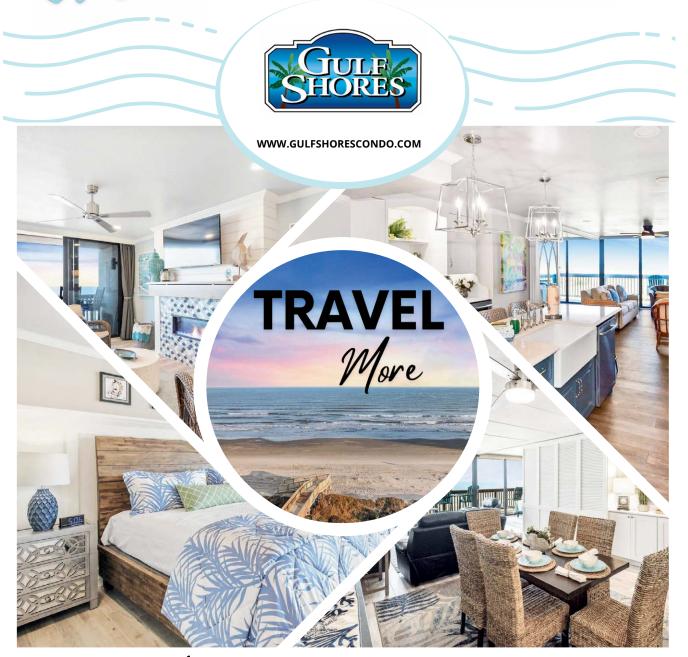
For anyone looking to start their journey to Port Aransas, Hawkins recommends springing for a house with a beach view, "just to get that sound in your ear and be able to walk to the beach." For visitors who are more "boat people" than "beach people," she recommends the bay side of the island, where you will be able to watch dolphins play as large tankers move through the channel.

For all the fun activities available, though, Hawkins' favorite thing is the tranquility afforded by her coastal safe harbor. She says, "My favorite thing about the island is that within two and a half hours I can be at the beach and it's a totally different world. There are no big buildings. No one's in a hurry...People are just in a good mood at the beach." She also adds an insider tip, "Oh, and everyone knows everyone. If you need to know anything, just get to know a local."

The love Hawkins feels for Port Aransas is obvious in the warmth with which she recounts her memories on the island. Like her grandmother and parents before her, the Port A tradition is one that she intends to carry on for many generations to come. Cherished memories like hers are easy to create on these shores, and it all starts with a visit.



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PORTAL to Port A

What comes to mind when you think of Port A?

The beach, of course, is likely at the top of the list, but what else? Perhaps it's something you can't quite put your finger on—a certain color or shape that's instantly evocative of a trip to the true Texas coast. Often, people describe their beach vacations in terms of where they stayed. "The four-story house with the big blue roof," for example, or "the one with the cool tiki bar." Oftentimes, those architectural elements—the shapes, colors, and textures—are just as memorable as the places where you ate or the fish you caught.



THE POD HOUSE

The Pod House is one of the most recognizable rentals in town. With its unique hexagonal shapes and ability to sleep a group of 12 people, seeing this home is an instant portal into the unique Port A way of life. You can rent the Pod House, or a number of other unique getaways, from Port A Escapes.



SUMMER PLACE

The textural element of Port Aransas architecture comes in at Summer Place. There's nothing that screams island life quite like a tiki-themed bar! The outdoor space with its teakwood and fringed palapa captures the essence of summer. Summer Place is available for rental through Life in Paradise Vacation Rentals.

CINNAMON SHORE & PALMILLA BEACH RESORT

The coastal homes in the Cinnamon Shore and Palmilla Beach resort communities are recognizable for their stunning coastal hues and shiplap walls—the epitome of a beach home. Take a look even deeper and you'll continue to discover elements that hint at the Port Aransas way of life, from the zigzagging path of the boardwalk and the weathered wood of a street sign to the open-air balconies and waving palm trees.















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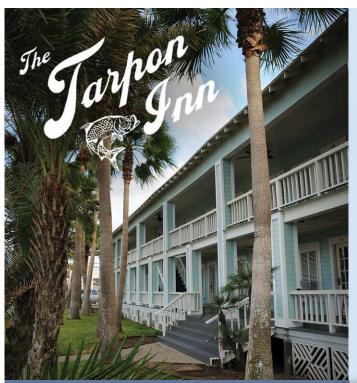












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Seafood & Spaghetti Works is a Port Aransas classic that has been operating since 1979. This hot spot offers a variety of delicious dishes from signature seafood creations to traditional Italian fare. New this year is the to-go kitchen, which allows you to call in your order and pick it up without the wait!

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A Perfect Pair

THE SOPHIA from Lisabella's

The Sophia, named after Italian bombshell Sophia Loren, is a refreshing cocktail with the barest hint of earthiness -a perfect complement to a creamy Italian dish.



Ingredients:

1.5 oz. limoncello

4.5 oz. prosecco

Sprig of fresh rosemary

Instructions:

- 1. Combine limoncello and ice in a cocktail shaker. Shake until thoroughly combined and chilled.
- 2. Strain chilled limoncello into a champagne flute and add in the prosecco.
- 3. Top with a sprig of fresh rosemary. Enjoy!



TORTELLINI LINDA

from Venetian Hot Plate

Tortellini Linda is a deliciously creamy pasta dish created by the late restaurant owner and chef in honor of his wife and current owner of Venetian Hot Plate, Linda Halioua.

Ingredients:

2.5 oz. gorgonzola cheese

% cup heavy cream

2 oz. roasted walnuts

9 oz. tortellini

Sprinkle of chopped parsley (optional)

Instructions:

1. In a saucepan, combine the gorgonzola cheese and heavy cream. Bring to a simmer and stir until the gorgonzola is melted and combined with the cream.

- 2. In a separate pot, bring water to a boil and add the tortellini. Boil until the pasta is ready.
- 3. Strain the pasta and add to the cream mixture. Add in the walnuts and sauté together for a few minutes.
- 4. Serve on a plate with a sprinkle of chopped parsley.

What are you in the *mood* for?

START HERE

When you're in Port Aransas, you don't want to waste precious beach time by spending hours trying to figure out where to eat. Instead, the next time someone asks, "What's for dinner?" just bring out this handy flowchart! At the end of the chart you'll find a local spot that is just what you're craving!

Would you like to dine al fresco or are you more of an indoor cat?



Are you looking for breakfast or do you want to have a meal later in the day?



Sounds like you're in the mood for Black Marlin **Bar & Grill!**

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What kind of cuisine do you want to try?

I want to add some spice to my life with Louisiana Cajun food.

in the mood for

The Crazy Cajun!

Sounds like you're

I want a variety of food that includes Japanese sushi rolls or boats, Asian-fusion dishes, and traditional seafood and steaks.

Sounds like you're

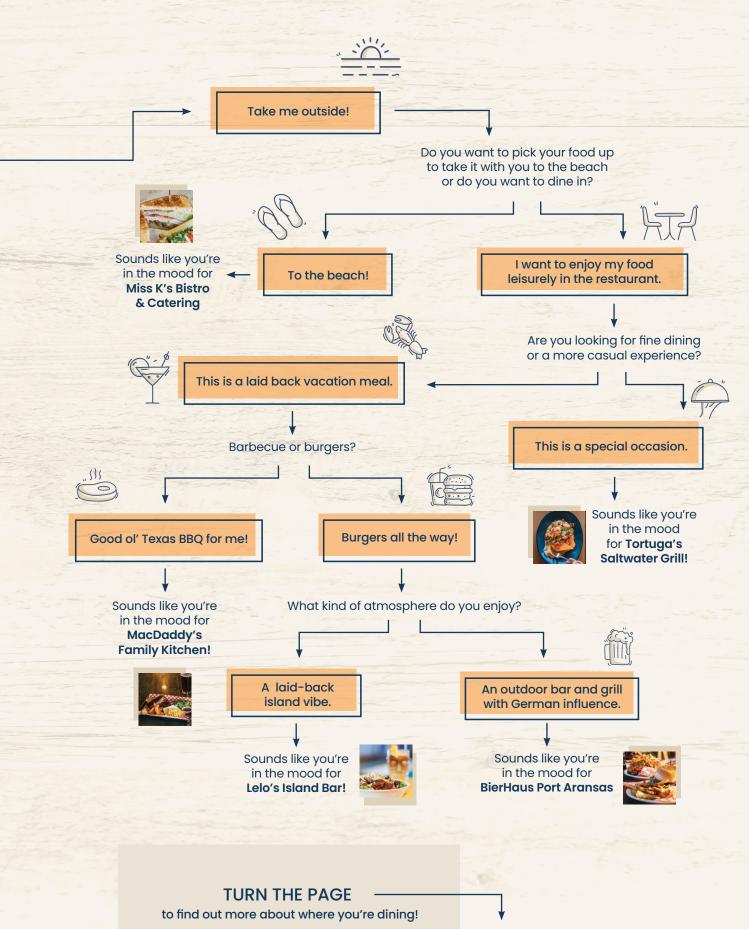
in the mood for **BlueWater** Cowboy Saloon!



I'd like to try Tex-Mex food with a coastal twist.

> Sounds like you're in the mood for La Playa **Mexican Grille!**



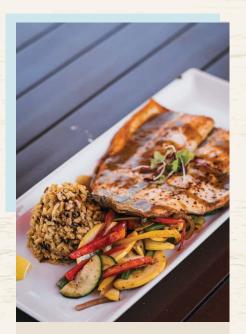




1886 Bar at Roosevelt's at the Tarpon Inn

1886 Bar at Roosevelt's at the Tarpon Inn is open to satisfy your cravings all day long! Breakfast and lunch menus at 1886 Bar are a more casual take on their upscale sister restaurant. A breakfast at 1886 Bar may include powdered sugar-dusted French toast, a slab of smoked salmon on avocado toast, or even ribeye with eggs. Of course, you won't want to forget a Bloody Mary!





The Crazy Cajun

The Crazy Cajun knows how to bring the Louisiana spice to this Texas island in a fun, family-friendly atmosphere. Boils of crab, shrimp, and more are served steaming hot on your table, and the menu is rounded out by other Cajun classics like gumbo, jambalaya, and étouffée.



Black Marlin Bar & Grill



Black Marlin Bar & Grill is serving up chef-driven cuisine like fresh fish and thick-cut steaks. Black Marlin's location

in Palmilla Beach Resort & Golf Community also means that they are leading the charge on sustainable dining efforts with agave straws, bamboo to-go containers, and more.







BlueWater Cowboy Saloon



The sushi boats are more like works of art than dishes, and the island-inspired fare will make you drool, but perhaps the most unique thing about BlueWater Cowboy Saloon is the third-floor view of the ocean.



La Playa Mexican Grille

South Texas is known for Mexican cuisine, but La Playa Mexican Grille elevates Tex-Mex to the next level. The perfect pairing for seafood enchiladas or a steaming plate of beef fajitas? An ice-cold margarita made with La Playa's custom tequila.



Tortuga's Saltwater Grill

Tortuga's Saltwater Grill is the ideal date night or celebration spot. Tender steaks, succulent seafood, and craft cocktails make every meal at Tortuga's a special occasion. The cold bar also means you can always get a stack of oysters, crab legs, or other feature fresh from the Gulf!



Miss K's Bistro & Catering

Miss K's Bistro & Catering is a local favorite restaurant where the food is always refreshingly homemade. Call ahead to ask Miss K's to put together a beach or "snackle" box for your group, or pick up a ready-to-heat casserole to take back to your vacation rental.



MacDaddy's Family Kitchen

Fresh slabs of barbecue and Southern comfort foods are waiting for you at MacDaddy's Family Kitchen. Fried fish and shrimp add an island flair to the menu. Don't skip out on dessert—the pecan pies and root beer floats at MacDaddy's Family Kitchen are some of the best around!



Lelo's Island Bar

Lelo's Island Bar encapsulates the island life. This tiki-style bar is mixing up island cocktails and slinging Jack & Coke beef burgers and tender steak bites all year long. Indoor and outdoor games like shuffleboard add to the jovial atmosphere.



BierHaus Port Aransas

BierHaus Port Aransas is one of the newest spots on the island! Gently sway in a swing seat while you dip a giant pretzel in homemade beer cheese or take a bite of a juicy burger. Make sure you order a drink, too. Their prickly pear margarita is a signature!





Word of MOUTH

Domingo Hernandez is the owner of Castaways Seafood and Grill in Port Aransas. Here you can read, in his own words, his take on being a restaurant owner in Port A.

How did you start with Castaways and get to where you are now?

"I started with Castaways in 2001. I had a family member that was working for the restaurant. I went and applied, and I think that Saturday I got hired. It was March of 2001. I started off in the kitchen on the grill and, you know, just worked my way up from there. I enjoyed the work. I had done many other genres of jobs before and [when] I got into Castaways I liked the work, liked the people, and just kind of went from there. A couple years in I became kitchen manager. A few years after that, I became the general manager and had been running the place up until we purchased it recently."

How is your family involved in the business?

"My wife also works here...She's the general manager. She's the accountant. She's the payroll manager. She's HR. She does a lot here. We have a couple of children—a nine-year-old boy and a four-year-old daughter-and they love coming up here and helping out. My son has actually set up the host stand and helped people at the door and taken them to their seats, and my daughter will walk around with a towel in her back pocket and go talk to tables and take orders. Won't write anything down, of course, but she'll take orders and then walk away. They love coming here and helping out and being a part of it."



If you were to eat a meal, from start to finish, at Castaways, what are you ordering?"

"Easy. When I come in here, I always start off with a spicy jalapeño margarita. Can't ever go wrong with calamari. It's hand breaded, in house, to order. For my entree, I would [order] our top dish, which is one of my favorites, the Jay's Special. I usually get a tuna medium rare with some rice and asparagus. And then it has a creamy Cajun crab sauce on top. Add a couple of grilled shrimp to that and that's my entrée. Finish it off with, of course, our house made bread pudding with the bourbon sauce. That's my every time go to."

Why should visitors come to Castaways?

For the same reason that we're in the business, [which] is to provide quality food, quality service. We're not owned by a group of owners, you know, that never touch foot in the restaurant. We're...like a mom-andpop shop. We run the business. We're here all the time. We interact with the employees and with the customers. I'm still involved completely in the restaurant. We're a family-owned business and we try to do it right. Come out and enjoy it."



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Small Town, Experiences Port Aransas may only be 14 square miles, but the possibility for adventure has no bounds. Whether you're scanning the sand in search of the elusive whole sand dollar or paddling out to catch a wave, the beauty of Port A is that you'll never have the same experience twice. 48 THE ISLAND GUIDE



Channel your inner...

How do you beach?

Is your emphasis on an uninterrupted time on the sand or do you want to learn everything you can about the island you're visiting? Are you traveling solo or bringing the extended family? These, and many more, are important questions to ask yourself when you're planning your beach vacation. However vou like to beach, here are some suggestions for when you come to Port A and want to "channel" your inner...

Thrill-Seeker:

If adrenaline is your thing, try out these activities to get your blood pumping!

- Fly high on a parasail trip with Sky's the Limit Parasailing or Chute 'Em Up Parasailing/Port A Parasail.
- Ride along on a guided jet ski tour around the island with Gettin' Salty Watersports.
- Paddle out on a night-time kayaking tour with GlowRow or tour the Lighthouse Lakes paddling trail with Coastal Bend Kayak.
- Rent a private boat for your party crew from Salt-Lyf Boat Cruises.



Cultural Connoisseur:

If you consider yourself more the arts and culture type, you won't want to miss these unique island hot spots.

- Tour the Chapel on the Dunes, the oldest consecrated church on Mustang Island, and see the stunning murals that decorate the interior.
- Take a class at the Port Aransas Art Center, then peruse the gallery walls to find your new favorite artist.
- Get tickets to anything from a musical drama to a theatrical cover band performance at the Port Aransas Community Theatre.
- Pay a visit to the "living exhibit" of Farley Boat Works before venturing over to the Port Aransas Museum for a more in-depth look into Port Aransas history.



Family Man:

If this is your kids' first time to the beach and you want to make it memorable, these activities are the way to a little one's dream vacation.

- All aboard the Red Dragon Pirate Cruise for swashbuckling fun with pirates in search of booty!
- Book a dolphin tour aboard Neptune's Charters to get up close and personal with local wildlife through a unique touch tank experience.
- Build a better sandcastle with a lesson from Mark Landrum, Port Aransas Sandcastle Guy.
- Tour the Patton Center for Marine Science Education at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute and interact with the exhibits to learn all about the island ecosystem.



Dog Lover:

If you plan to beach with your pup, try out these pet-friendly spots. After all, man's best friend deserves a vacation, too!

- Go off-leash at the **Port Aransas Dog Park** and meet up with like-minded dogs and owners.
- Explore miles of beach on the island or take the jetty boat over to St. Jo's Island (just remember to bring a leash and plenty of water).
- Have a meal at dog-friendly restaurants like Trout Street Bar & Grill, Fins Grill & Icehouse, Grumbles Seafood Co., and more!
- Play with dog toys picked up from Jackfish Cart Rentals and enjoy a snow cone on their porch.





Lovebird:

If you want to enjoy some quality time with your significant other, you'll want to share some fantastic meals, beautiful views, and tasty drinks. These spots are as romantic as they come.

- Enjoy a massage at Balinese Spa & Boutique.
- Make reservations for a romantic meal at Roosevelt's at the Tarpon Inn.
- Snuggle together on a sunset cruise aboard the Scarlet Lady **Dolphin Adventures.**
- Rent fat-tire bicycles from Island Motor Bikes, Big Shell Bikes, or Island Surf Rentals and cruise together along the sand at sunrise.



Beach Bum:

If relaxation is the name of your game, why not make your beach trip as comfortable and easy as possible? These services will help you achieve your goal!

- Rent a chair and palapa setup from Port A Local Co. or 361 Blue for a hassle-free beach day.
- Board the **jetty boat** for a trip to the secluded St. Jo's Island for uninterrupted relaxation and exploration.
- Center yourself as the sun comes up at a beach yoga class taught by Selena Esensee of Inspirational Yoga Warriors.
- Wash off from the beach and treat yourself to a relaxed round of golf at Palmilla Beach **Resort & Golf Community.**







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Barefoot BALANCING ACT

On any given day, you'll find a group of surfers paddling out to the third sandbar or a couple of paddleboarders gliding along a calm waterway. Ask these adventurers and they're sure to tell you that there's a unique kind of exhilaration that comes along with riding atop the waves instead of diving down into them. If you've ever seen the groups who congregate around Horace Caldwell Pier to take advantage of the wave breaks and yearned to join them, now is your chance. Are you ready to find your balance?



The centuries-old sport of surfing has a strong hold on the hearts of islanders. Little groms gather on the beach to participate in Texas Surf Camps each year, and the Texas Gulf Surfing Association even hosted their 2023 championship here. But you don't have to have all the experience in the world or the perfect pop up to enjoy the euphoria of the sport. Texas Surf Camps offers private or group surfing lessons for all ages, and any surfer can rent a board from BoardHouse Surf & Skate or **Island Surf Rentals** so you can hit the water without having to provide your own equipment.

Do you know what'SUP? Stand up paddleboarders sure do! Paddleboarding is a fun alternative to surfing that allows you to explore the inlets of the Port A coast. Standing upright on a board while steering with a paddle may seem impossible at first glance, but Gettin' Salty Watersports, Inc. and Texas Surf Camps make it easy by offering SUP

lessons for all ages and abilities. With their help, you'll be paddling away on your own in no time.

The major thrillseekers will find a community in kitesurfing. This water activity, also called kiteboarding, is a challenge for even the most athletic...but all can agree that the payoff is unreal! The sport's high-speed skimming and leaps of several feet out of the water release an unbridled joy that's difficult to match elsewhere. Get started on your kiteboarding journey by taking a beginner course from **Third Coast** Kitesurfing.

Whatever your board of choice, it's time to begin your own barefoot balance act in Port Aransas.

Brittany Tupaj Faulkner and Magen Storrie are two of the women at the forefront of the surfing community in Port A, and they can attest to the cleansing power of the Gulf waves. Watch their full Salty Story by scanning the QR code.





Discover THE ISLAND LIFE

WHEN YOU'RE ON ISLAND TIME STRESS JUST MELTS AWAY!

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SOUND WAVES THIS

In Port Aransas, new and old music venues are coming together to create the sounds of the coast. Venues you know and love are still rocking along, and new or revamped venues are drumming up fresh entertainment options for those who want to experience the rhythm of the island life.

You can rely on tried-and-true venues like the funky Gaff Bar and the ever-treasured Treasure Island for great tunes and fun times. The atmosphere at the Gaff is quirky, an ideal backdrop for an entertaining evening of live music or even belt sander races. At Treasure Island, there's plenty of room to dance with a drink in your hand during one of many themed nights or on any given weekend!

If you're looking for a place where everyone can join in on the jams, check out Bron's Backyard. Bron's is a reimagining of your typical adults-only bar and music scene. Featuring lawn games, snow cones, and multiple musicians a week, it's as kid-friendly, petfriendly, and fun of a music venue as they come.



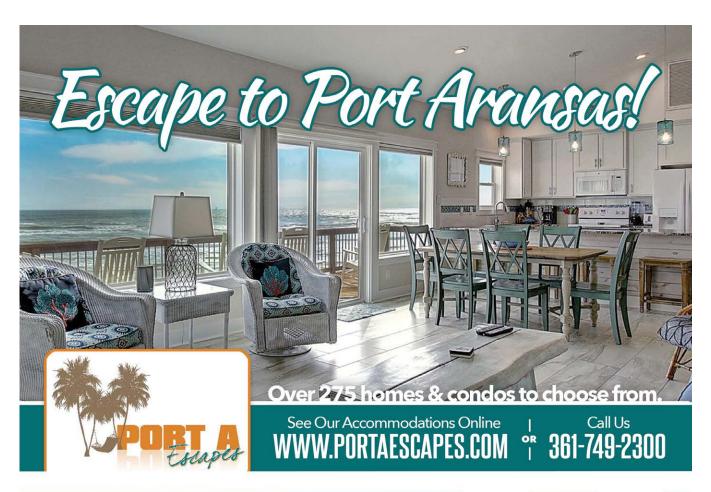


Between these and other hot spots like Bernie's Beach House, Port A Beer Hut, and REDs at Palmilla Beach, it's easy to find live music, but you would be missing a beat if you neglected to check out the new venues

Old and new collide in the triumphant return of Shorty's Place to the streets of Port A! Shorty's, the "oldest and friendliest," may be in a new location and recently reopened, but this dive still has the same four walls, same hats hanging from the ceiling, and same salty vibe cherished by generations of Port Aransans going back to 1946.

Truly new in town are The Palm Social Club, an elevated cocktail lounge shaking up the music scene, and BierHaus Port Aransas, which has joined the ranks as a laid-back venue with cold drinks and great food! This year, an outdoor dining and entertainment venue called Sip Yard Port Aransas is also excited to be opening its doors to a new wave of talented musicians.

New venue, old venue, somewhere in between-one thing's for certain...when you make your way to Port A, you're going to need your dancing flip flops!



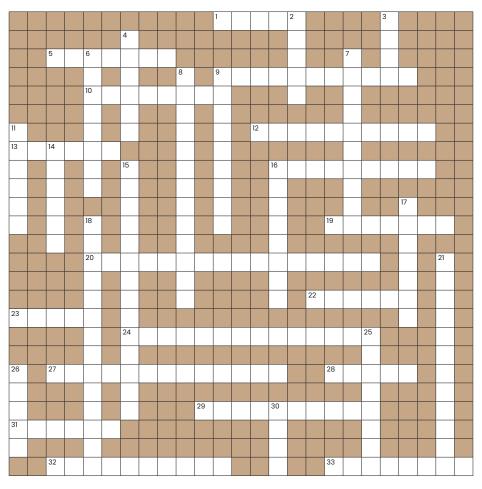


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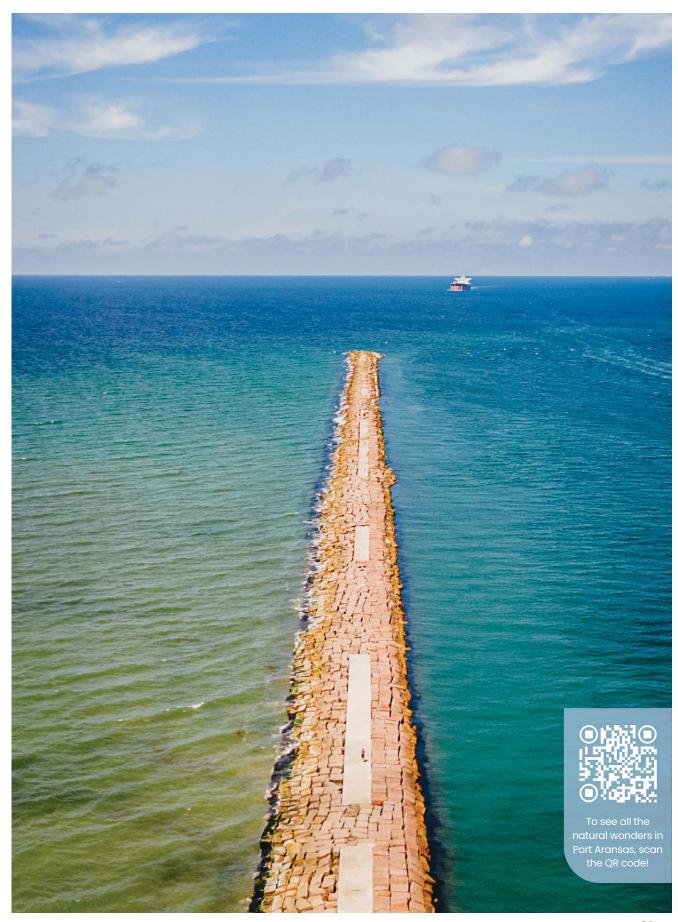
Beachy Keen A CROSSWORD FOR PORT ARANSAS BEACH LOVERS

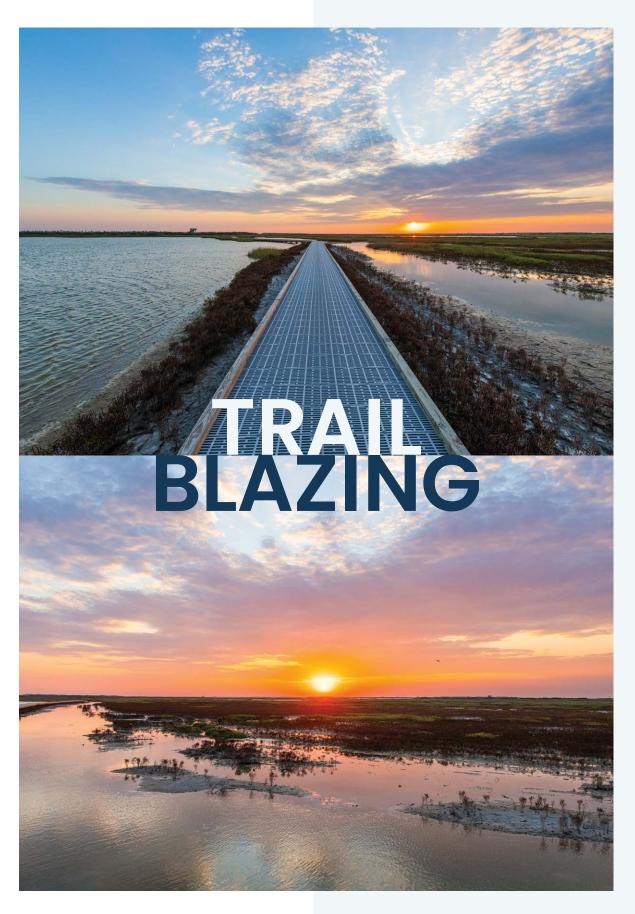


ACROSS

- 1. Beach Border (5) 5. _____ Island (7) 9. Historic, fishy name for Port Aransas (6,5)
- 10. Type of fishing (8)
- 12. Nighttime boat marker (10)
- 13. Traditions ____ here (6)
- 16. Oldest hotel in Port Aransas (6,3)
- 19. Island fare (7)
- 20. Port Aransas city bird (7,9)
- 22. Deep sea catch and local high school mascot (6)
- 23. The land along the edge of the bay (5)
- 24. Grandaddy of fishing tournaments (4,3,5,2)
- 27. Golfing spot (8,5)
- 28. Long-necked, threatened bird, Reddish ____ (5)
- 29. Fishing good luck wish (5,5)
- 31. Kemp's _ _ _ _ sea turtle (6)
- 32. What one might ask for when trying to locate a friend on the beach (4,6)
- 33. Port A transportation (4,4)

- 2. Another name for San José Island (5)
- 3. Species of big game fish found in Port Aransas (4)
- A fully-loaded pizza one might order after attending belt sander races at The Gaff (6)
- 6. Treat on a hot day (4,4)
- 7. The only restaurant on the beach (5,5)
- 8. Some Port A restaurants will take your fresh fish and do this (4,4,5)
- 9. April's flagship event, ____ Fest (5,4)
- 11. Boat Works family name (6)
- 14. Oldest consecrated church on Mustang Island known as _____ on the Dunes (6)
- 15. Why were you late today? (2,2,6,4)
- 16. Island music (8)
- 17. Beach _____(7)
- 18. Pier on the Port Aransas beach (6,8)
- 21. Go here to learn about local marine systems (6,6)
- 25. High-flying adventure
- 26. One way to get to Port A (5)
- 30. The alternate rising and falling of the sea (4)







Port A's location in a central flyway makes nature watching on these trails a vibrant. ever-changing experience for every season.



The Port Aransas Nature Preserve is making new connections! There have long been four preserve sites to choose from for your excursions, but now, Joan & Scott Holt Paradise Pond. Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, the Nature Preserve at Charlie's Pasture, and the Port Aransas Community Park are all connected via hike and bike paths so that you can extend your nature journey!

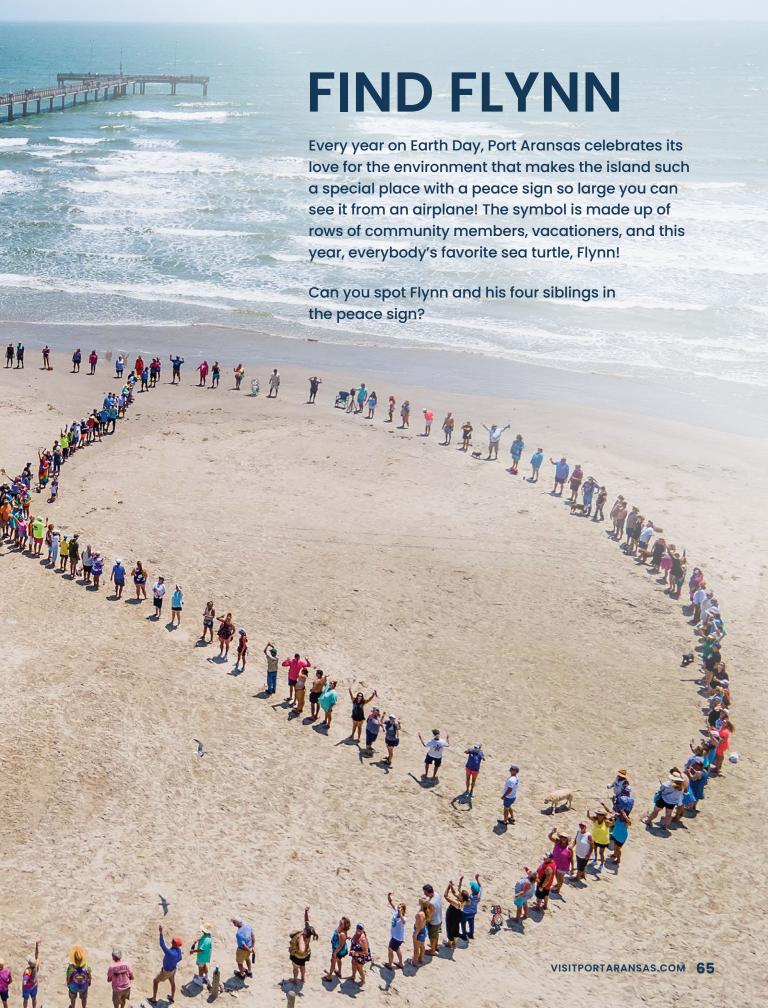
These new trails and boardwalks have unlocked an immersive Port A experience, one where you can lose yourself in nature and explore for miles without ever stepping foot off the path. Meander through the Port Aransas wetlands on foot or a bicycle to observe hundreds of unique bird species, like Roseate Spoonbills and Crested Caracaras.

Zigzagging through the Port Aransas Nature Preserve, you'll realize that Port A is far more than just a beach. Instead, this island home is



a varied and unique ecosystem where "locals" also trot on four legs through the reeds, soar overhead in a bright blue sky, and paddle through waterways. On your next trip to Port Aransas, experience it for yourself. Connect the pieces of a Port A paradise. Be a trailblazer.









HOW TO BE A FRIEND OF FLYNN

Everyone's favorite Kemp's Ridley sea turtle hatchling, Flynn, has spent some time in the Port Aransas community learning all about his new home! Now that he's settled in, he'd love to show you how you can be an ecotourist (or just one of Flynn's friends!) on your next island vacation.

FLYNN'S FIRST RECOMMENDATION IS TO JOIN FLYNN'S BEACH SQUAD!

When Flynn hatched on the beach, he was immediately distracted by the trash he found, which eventually inspired him to create his own clean-up crew.



You can help keep Port Aransas clean for future visitors (human and turtle alike) by taking part in Flynn's Beach Squad, a year-round volunteer opportunity that picks up rubbish everywhere from the beach to the parks to the main streets of Port Aransas. The squad meets all year long, which means you have plenty of opportunities to do your part! Scan the QR code to sign up for your squad meet-up.

Flynn is proud of his beach squad, and he continues to recruit people like you to help champion the island with him in new and exciting ways! He just knows that anyone who visits Port Aransas will be inspired to care for it as he does.

OTHER WAYS TO HELP:

To get to know the island better, Flynn recommends:

- attending a sea turtle release put on by the Amos Rehabilitation Keep,
- learning about the coastal environment at the **Patton Center for Marine Science** Education.
- or attending February's Whooping Crane Festival, which showcases the rare birds that call Port Aransas home.
- With its miles of trails and incredible wildlife, the **Port Aransas Nature Preserve** is another one of Flynn's favorite spots to hang out and meet friends!



With the help of some local mentors, Flynn continues to learn everything he can to be a caring sea turtle, from golf cart guidelines to how to be respectful to other beachgoers.

Scan the QR code to follow along as he figures out how to do things the Port A way...and maybe discover a few things yourself!



















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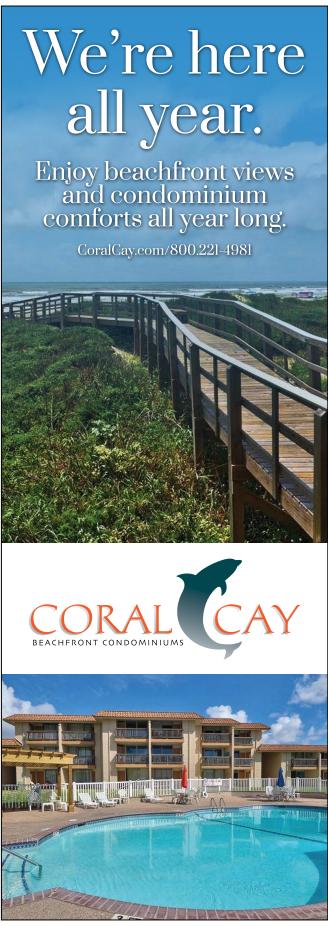






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ON THE

Did you know that in Port Aransas you are allowed to drive your car right onto the sand? The beach is treated like a road, and all you need to park on the beach is a parking permit that lasts for a full calendar year. No parking in a lot and lugging your beach gear to the closest spot-just pull right up to the location of your choosing and enjoy!

> With so many beach cart vendors to choose from, you're sure to find the right cart for your crew! Scan the QR code for all the options!





As easy as that is, the island has kicked up the beach experience a notch further by making beach-ready golf carts the go-to mode of transportation. These beach carts are the epitome of a hassle-free beach day that won't require you to vacuum out your car, but most of all, they're tons of fun! Built-in Bluetooth speakers, glowing lights, fun patterns, plenty of space for the family and your beach bags—golf carts are a fun-filled beach day on wheels.

72 THE ISLAND GUIDE | Nature

There's no time of day (or night) that the Port Aransas beach won't take your breath away. TODAWN VISITPORTARANSAS.COM 73





THE SOUVENIR THAT LASTS

You can't quite bottle up the sun and the sand, but you can take a bit of the Port Aransas magic home with you by making time for a family photo session on the beach.

Merdog Media and Shannon Lafayette Photography both produce beautiful images that somehow capture the light of both the picturesque sunrise and your family's love for each other. These photographers are not afraid to play in the sand or splash in the waves to capture the authentic joy of a family enjoying the beach.

Even with limited time on the island, you can still get great family photos by taking advantage of the mini sessions hosted by Shannon Lafayette Photography a couple times a year. These seasonal shoots employ a scenic Port A background to get precious photos in a short time span—a perfect situation for young wiggle worms!

Let the photos that hang in the hallways tell the stories of your memories on the true Texas coast.





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- These khaki shorts are BoardHouse Surf & Skate's very own brand. A shirt print that features coastal iconography makes the whole ensemble cool for the summer!
- Indigo Eclectic is known for pieces that both stand out and stand the test of time. This coral and blue combination is perfect for a night on the coast.
- Shine bright in this Queen of Sparkles mini from Bella Bella Boutique. Paired with a chunky silver ring and earrings on top and white boots on the bottom, this look is head-to-toe glamorous.
- **BoardHouse Surf & Skate** has the guys covered with comfortable (but still put together) shorts and shirts that are botanical without screaming "tropical tourist."
- **BlueWater Cowboy Mercantile** has options for men equally ideal for a day of fishing or a date night. What's extra fun about these shorts? When they get wet, a fish print is revealed on the fabric!



- This white separates set from Balinese Boutique is flowy and chic. Coral earrings from Coquina Dance Jewelry, a pearl bracelet set from Balinese Boutique, and rattan sandals from C & G Sisters Island **Boutique** round out the outfit.
- Stand out island-style in this **BlueWater Cowboy Mercantile** combo. Not to be outshined by
- the hot pink shorts, this polo shows off a love of fishing and hunting in neon light-esque outlines.
- Turn heads in this floral satin maxi from Raggdoll Boutique. Add cork heels and pastel petal earrings, also from Raggdoll Boutique, to attend an event like a beach wedding or dinner party!
- Want to host your very own poolside party? These iridescent wine glasses and fish tumblers are glass-free and from Port A's very own Ace Hardware. Pick up pool floats and beach bags from The Islander and a designer ice bucket from Indigo Eclectic and you're ready to go!





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SHADES

Every good stylist knows it's the accessories that make the outfit. Let the boutiques in Port Aransas complete your look—and keep you protected from the sun-with these little something extras.



A Volcom bucket hat from BoardHouse Surf and Skate, sunglasses from Balinese Boutique, and earrings from Tula Blue make for this casual chic surfer girl look.



Sunset earrings from Coquina Dance Jewelry were made just for a special date night. Add this pearl bracelet set from Balinese Boutique and your date won't be able to keep their eyes off you!



Cowboy Mercantile and woven hat from C & G Sisters Island Boutique.



"Always on Vacay" is how it feels to wear this hat from Bella Bella Boutique! The brim will protect you from the sun...and the sparkles will protect you from stress!



Gone fishin' or gone partyin'? You can't tell the difference with this Hemlock Hat Co. straw hat and Vans sunglasses from BoardHouse Surf and Skate!



Tula Blue is made for stacking! These necklaces, bracelets, and earrings are adventure proof and made with hand-spun rope by women right here in South Texas.



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Hear

As the saying goes, "She sells seashells by the seashore." Loving Coastal Living and Origins do, that is! Bring one of their decorative conch shells to your ear and the sound of the ocean will instantly transport you back to the stress-free beaches of Port Aransas. Looking for a statement piece to show in your home? Loving Coastal Living also specializes in vintage giant clam shells!

Senses

The senses play an inextricable role in memory. You don't just remember a day at the beach—you remember the look of the sky painted with streaks of orange, the smell of the salt air, the taste of your beach picnic, the feel of the sun on your face, and the sound of the seagulls freewheeling in the air. So how do you bottle up a day at the beach and take it home with you? Get all five senses involved! These souvenir ideas will awaken your senses and ensure you are never far from the feeling of a trip to the coast.

Touch

Expect your dreams to dance with images of waves and warm sand when you cuddle up at home with a nautical blanket or pillow from Cita Coastal Resort Wear & Home Goods. The bright fish prints and cozy coastal shades will calm you instantly!



Taste

The homemade fudge and caramel at Winton's Island Candy are mouthwatering, and the shop itself is reminiscent of an antique candy store. There's a reason a stop at Winton's Island Candy is a tradition for generations—a bag of their candy is a tasty dose of nostalgia!



See

The outline of a kite fluttering in the coastal breeze is a sight to behold. Fly It! Port A's collection of kites of all sizes will unleash your inner child and release the same feeling of uninhibited joy you find at the beach.

Smell

Take a deep breath in and fill your mind with the calming aroma of the beach...now head over to Coastal Closet and find that same zen in one of the shop's NEST New York candles. There, you will find such irresistible scents as "Linen" and "Ocean Mist & Sea Salt."



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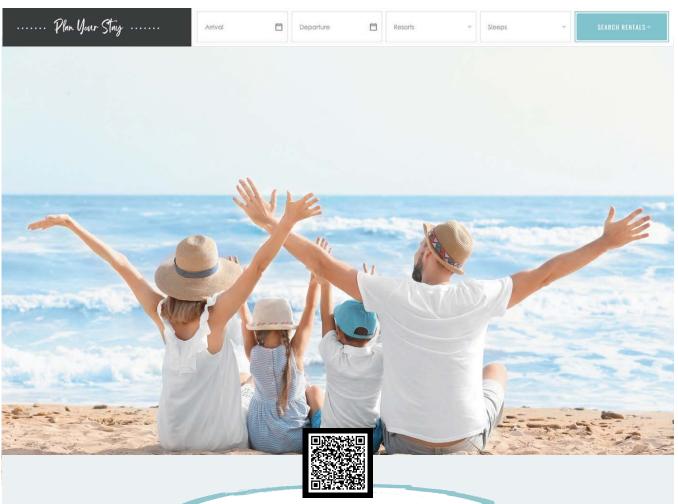
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Word of MOUTH

COASTAL TRENDS

Shana Mora Heard is a third generation Port Aransas resident who owns Cita Coastal Resort Wear & Home Goods. Here you can read, in her own words, her take on being a boutique owner in Port Aransas.



How did Cita get started?

"Originally our sister company, Cierra, had stores in Austin, Houston, Dallas, San Antonio... We decided to help my mother open a store, and that's how it started. We named it after my mother, which was what my children called her. It was her 'grandma name.' She also had a nickname from some friends, 'Mamacita,' because she was really small. So that's how the name Cita came about."

How do you find inspiration? How do you decide what you're going to bring into the store?

"Years and years of doing this. I don't even think about it at this point, it's just automatic. We've continued the basic original concept that we started out with 28 years ago, so we still carry home goods, clothing, [and] jewelry. We're always looking for unique pieces no matter what it is. If we see that it's been repeated too many times, we leave it and we move on to something else. We're very forward thinking."

Do you have any repeat customers? Can you share a favorite story?

"I don't really have a favorite story. I still have people though that will come in and they'll say, 'Oh, I bought this piece and that piece and this piece from you way back.' They try to think how long ago it was and they're like, '[Wow], it was 20 years ago.' Our customer base goes back very, very far."

When you think of coastal fashion, what comes to mind? Is it a color? Is it a texture?

"Well, it's all of the above. When you're talking fashion, it's the linens, the caftans, the cover ups, and of course, here in South Texas, the Mexican dresses...as far as home goods, it's just beautiful accessories that are unique. We like to specialize in good quality at really reasonable prices. That is our niche. Our quality is great. Our prices are great."

If you were on a desert island and could only have one coastal outfit, what would it be?

"It'd be a gorgeous caftan. Fabulous jewelry. A hat. And a killer straw bag."

What is your favorite thing about the island?

"The beach is beautiful. We have such a gorgeous beach. I love the marshes. I love the birding. It's changed so much, but there's still a core group of families here and people that have all known each other for generations and that's a nice, small-town feeling. It's also fun to hear customers who tell stories of when their parents or grandparents started bringing them to the island years ago and now, they're bringing their children. That's a real neat thing about the island. It tells you about the beauty and the allure of it. Generations love to visit."



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