

VISIT PANAMA CITY BEACH

WINTER 2017 MAGAZINE

**Pickleball
enthusiasts take
to the courts**

**Renourishment
work keeps
erosion at bay**

**Festivals fill
the winter PCB
calendar**

**MARDI
GRAS**

IT'S DAT TIME!

PAGE 46

Walking ON WATER

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IN FOCUS

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68 FOOD If you are looking to economize on the price of an evening meal without compromising on portion sizes, you'll want to check out our guide to early bird specials.

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76 LOCALS At the Shadow Box, displays feature eclectic mixes of items — traditional, post-modern and in between — and open the eyes of shoppers to new room decorating possibilities.

82 PCB TOPS The grouper sandwich is a staple in high demand at restaurants throughout the region. Chefs start with a flaky, white fillet and a bun and create variations on a theme with sauces, condiments and other add-ons.

86 SOMETHING FOR ALL No matter your vacationer archetype, the beach offers activities that conform to your interests and energy levels, ranging from the kicked-back to the exhilarating.

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ADVERTISING DESIGNER Meredith Brooks
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AD SERVICES COORDINATOR Lisa Sostre
PROOFREADER Melinda Lanigan
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS Hannah Burke, Jason Dehart, Kristin Luna,
Thomas J. Monigan, Kirstin Redfield, Liesel Schmidt
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS Chase Alexander Photography, Michael Booini,
Holly Gardner, Chris Hermans, Saige Roberts



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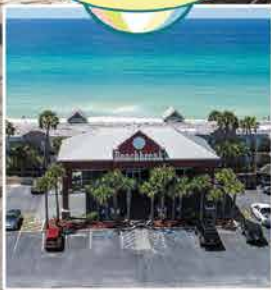
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THE GREATEST GIFT THE WINTER

season can provide is a time for reflection, renewal and a whole lot of fun. Families from across the world come to Panama City Beach for our sunny days, sugar sand beaches and fun and exciting events. As we settle into the holiday season and prepare for a new year, Panama City Beach provides opportunities for visitors to create new traditions with their loved ones.

Featured in this year's winter guide are a variety of stories that capture the essence of our beach, including different cuisines, ample shopping destinations and seasonal events to fit any visitor's interest. Ranging from the best grouper sandwich on the beach (pg. 82), to authentic flavors of home brewed Kombucha (featured on our shopping page, 64), we hope you use this guide for your next culinary beach adventure. If fishing is more your style, check out the Chasin' the Sun fishing spotlight on page 34, giving you all of the details on fishing in Panama City Beach. The third season of "Chasin' The Sun" will premiere in January 2018 on the Discovery Channel in its regular time slot of Saturdays at 7:30 a.m." This issue will not only help build your itinerary for your next visit, but give you a background of how we maintain the beauty of our beaches. Read more about the beach renourishment project on page 50, while we share the importance of responsible beach management.

Fun events, such as our annual Beach Home for the Holidays, taking place over Thanksgiving weekend, allows visitors to start a new tradition with their family - Thanksgiving on the beach. Take a break from the stresses of the holiday season, and leave the entertaining up to us. With live holiday music, bonfires and S'mores, the whole family can enjoy the sights and sounds of Panama City Beach.

This winter season will bring changing tides and new horizons, as our guests and their families visit the Real.Fun.Beach. Providing the best beach experience for our visitors is our priority, and we are happy you could join us.

Dan Rowe, President and CEO

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You can choose from 10 pre-set views to check on the waves and the water, or take a look down our white sandy beaches in either direction.

As an extra treat, you'll be able to save and share images from the webcam, or see a time-lapse replay of the previous day's sunset. Check it out! It's the next best thing to actually getting the sand between your toes.



LIVE VIEWS OF PCB

Even if you can't be here in person, you can catch a glimpse of Panama City Beach from anywhere in the world! Check out the white sand, emerald green water or last night's sunset!

[WATCH LIVE](#)



Visit our website to find out about current beach conditions!

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» Get Inspired

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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



Speckled Sea Trout



Flounder



Redfish



Whiting



Callico Scallop



Fighting Conch



Coquina Shells

Osprey



Brown Pelican



Snowy Egret



Mahi Mahi



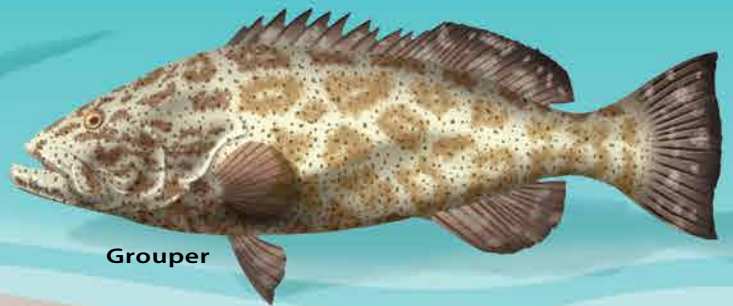
Pompano



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.



Water features abound at the **HOMBRE GOLF COURSE** and at the Jack Nicklaus and Walter Byrd layouts at **BAY POINT** (bottom).





Golfers Flock to Links

Winter visitors and year-round members share courses

BY THOMAS J. MONIGAN

WINTER IN PANAMA CITY BEACH and Bay County means bright, sometimes chilly mornings and cool afternoons brightened by glorious sunshine — conditions perfect for some outdoor exercise. And if you're looking for something scenic that also presents a test of skill, check out our local golf courses.

BAY POINT GOLF CLUB

This is part of Sheraton Bay Point Resort, and it features The Nicklaus Course and The Meadows course.

“It's pretty packed out here in the winter,” said Nate Starr, the assistant pro who works with general manager Ryan Mulvey and pro Colby Pitts. “Last year we averaged 400 a day on each course.”

When Starr completes his training, all three will be PGA Class A members. The Nicklaus Course is the only one in Northwest Florida designed by the PGA legend. It served as a U.S. Open local qualifying site last year.

There are five sets of tees on the Nicklaus Course, measuring between 7,152 and 4,974 yards, with par at either 72 or 73. The Meadows Course measures between 6,913 and 5,140 yards, with a par of 72. There is also a large practice facility, which includes a full-size driving range.



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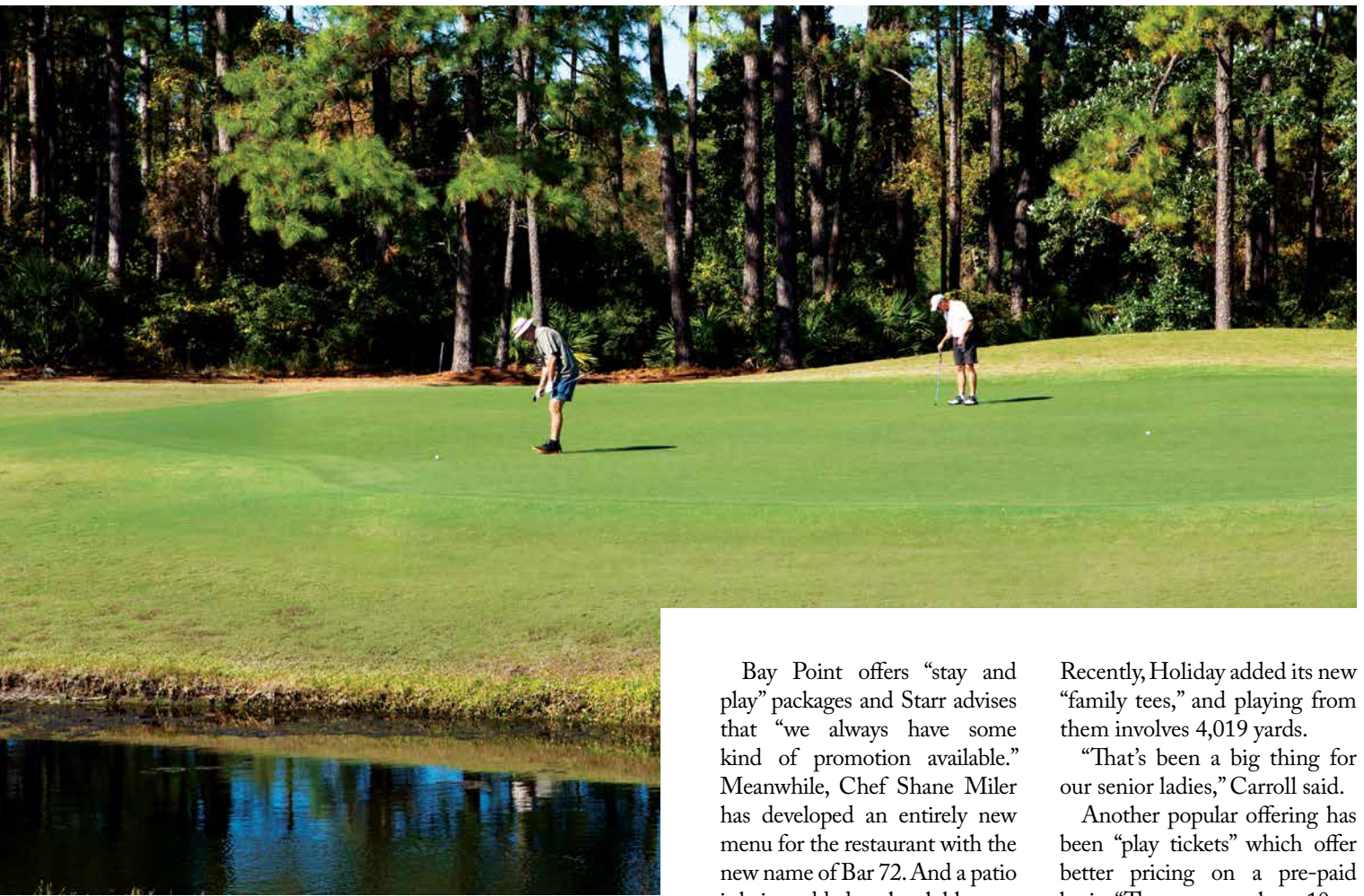


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Bay Point offers “stay and play” packages and Starr advises that “we always have some kind of promotion available.” Meanwhile, Chef Shane Miler has developed an entirely new menu for the restaurant with the new name of Bar 72. And a patio is being added to the clubhouse. “We have a lot of snowbirds who play with members, so it’s a good mixture,” Starr said.

HOLIDAY GOLF CLUB

Holiday features “probably the biggest winter league in Bay County” according to Brad Carroll, its PGA pro.

“We’ll have at times 140 to 150 golfers playing on Tuesdays and Thursdays,” Carroll said. “It’s really popular after the holidays. We’ve got some people who have been playing in the league for over 20 years.”

League play is based on a points system according to handicap, and flights are determined by skill level, Carroll said. “There’s a pretty heavy discount for playing in the league, Carroll said, “and each year we have special gifts for those who hit the 10-year, 15-year and 20-year mark.”

Depending on what set of tees you play, the course measures between 5,151 and 6,859 yards.

Recently, Holiday added its new “family tees,” and playing from them involves 4,019 yards.

“That’s been a big thing for our senior ladies,” Carroll said.

Another popular offering has been “play tickets” which offer better pricing on a pre-paid basis. “They can purchase 10 to 35 plays and it runs from Oct. 1 to March 31,” Carroll said. “Last year we allowed people to share those. It really goes hand-in-hand with league play.”

HOMBRE GOLF CLUB

The Hombre opened with 18 holes in December 1989 and has recently started to return to that format. Previously there were three nines: “The Good,” “The Bad” and “The Ugly.”

Hombre’s new 18 has parts of those last two formed into 6,800 yards with a par of 72, and local PGA pro Jerry Pate has helped with the design.

“Golf at The Hombre is probably in the best shape it’s been in for the past eight years,” said Robby Willis, the club’s general manager and director of golf. “There’s a lot of scoring opportunities, and depending on your skill level, it could be high or it could be low scoring. It’s just a lot of fun.”



The large winter league at the **HOLIDAY GOLF CLUB** (top photo), located just off Panama City Beach Parkway, includes players that have participated for more than 20 years. At **THE HOMBRE**, two 18-hole courses are in top shape following recent upgrades.

“We usually see 250 people that day. It usually books solid in one day two weeks out. We also have a special free menu that includes wings, hot dogs, crawfish étouffée and draft beer. They absolutely love the food, and we usually go through four or five kegs of beer.” — Beth Langford, Signal Hill Golf Club owner and operator



SIGNAL HILL GOLF CLUB's 18 holes include some tight fairways on the back nine, but the layout is mostly open and forgiving, making it popular among players of all skill levels.

MICHAEL BOONIN

Willis added that winter golf means special rates and multi-round passes are available. “We usually get a lot of people who take advantage of that,” he said.

Last spring, the course partnered with Callaway Golf to introduce the Hombre Performance Center, with Hank Castleberry as its director.

“It’s full service, with custom fittings and lessons, and it’s going great,” said Castleberry, whose résumé includes eight years with Edwin Watts Golf. “I’m sure we’ll be getting a lot of snowbirds during the winter.”

SIGNAL HILL GOLF CLUB

Built by John Henry Sherman in 1963, this course will celebrate its 55th birthday in March of 2018, according to owner

and operator Beth Langford, who just happens to be Sherman’s daughter.

Family tradition continues at Signal Hill with Langford’s son, Chris Vickers, as one its managers. And grandson Chip Vickers works in the pro shop.

Winter golfers usually play the whites, making this par-71 course measure 4,849 yards, Langford said. Special seasonal rates (Dec. 1 to March 31) include 10-round and 20-round tickets that include the cart fee.

Signal Hill’s annual Mardi Gras Snowbird Tournament is one of the highlights of the season. It takes place a week before Fat Tuesday — Feb. 6 in 2018.

“We usually see 250 people that day,” Langford said. “It usually books solid in one day two weeks out. We also have a special free menu that includes wings, hot dogs, crawfish étouffée and draft beer. They absolutely love the food, and we usually go through four or five kegs of beer.” ●



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“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.



From Beach Balls to Mardi Gras Beads

A terrific variety of events enhance the winter season **BY STEVE BORNHOFT**



NOV 24–25, 2017

❄️ BEACH HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS THANKSGIVING WEEKEND

For many holiday enthusiasts, it's time to bust out the tree and candy canes as soon as the Thanksgiving turkey is devoured. This Thanksgiving Weekend, Beach Home for the Holidays at Aaron Bessant Park will launch the community into a winter wonderland, where holiday music concerts take the stage, Santa makes an appearance, and there's plenty of hot cocoa to go around. This event will also feature the annual tree lighting, the official kickoff to the season of giving!

DEC. 31, 2017

☀️ BEACH BALL DROP

Locals and longtime visitors know there's only one place to be on New Year's Eve. Pack into Pier Park with the family for an 8 p.m. countdown. Little ones light up as 10,000 beach balls bounce into the crowd and fireworks light up the sky. Grown-ups may wish to stick around for some live music until midnight, when the illuminated Celebration Tower will drop its iconic beach ball into the new year. With more fireworks to follow, 2018 — the Beach Ball Drop's 10th anniversary year — will be off to a blazing start.

NOV 9–12, 2017

☀️ HOLLY FAIR BY JUNIOR LEAGUE OF PANAMA CITY

While it is certainly a unique shopping experience, Holly Fair, held at Edgewater Beach & Golf Resort, is a holiday tradition that helps fund the Junior League of Panama City's many community projects. Over 90 merchants will set up booths at the fair in order to sell apparel, jewelry, home goods, holiday items and loads more. Guests will also enjoy live music and great food.

DEC 2, 2017

☀️ PANAMA CITY BEACH MARATHON

Ready, set, run! This year's marathon starts at 7 a.m. in front of Pier Park's Margaritaville, where participants will commence a 26.2-mile jaunt along Front Beach Road and Thomas Drive and through St. Andrews State Park. Runners who don't want this big of an undertaking can sprint through a half-marathon or 5K. Little athletes under the age of 10 will love the Kid's Fun Run, where each will be awarded a special ribbon at the finish line. Afterwards, an awards ceremony at Margaritaville will recognize winners in each division. PCBMarathon.com

DEC 8–10, 2017

☀️ EMERALD COAST CHRISTMAS

Take a break from the hustle-bustle pace of the holiday season and head to Aaron Bessant Park to share some Christmas cheer with your neighbors. Local vendors will sell food, crafts and more, and there will be several Christmas programs and

performances from local school groups, dance troupes and other performers. Children will love the live Nativity and petting zoo. Admission is free.

DEC 2017–JAN 2018

☀️ MARINA CIVIC CENTER EVENTS

For a special holiday treat, the Moscow Ballet will be coming to the Marina Civic Center on Dec. 1 to perform the beloved classic, "Great Russian Nutcracker." Touring in America since 1993, the Moscow Ballet is composed of international, award-winning dancers who bewitch audiences with the grace of their gift. Then, on Jan. 13, the POPS Orchestra will perform "Making Overtures" at 7:30 p.m. Talented musicians will tug at your heartstrings with awe-inspiring pieces including "Fingal's Cave" and the "Russian Easter Overture."



DEC 2017–FEB 2018

☀️ KALEIDOSCOPE THEATER

For those looking for a little drama this winter, the Kaleidoscope theater is presenting three different productions. The dark comedy, *Crimes of the Heart*, is a tale of three sisters with immoral secrets, and runs throughout the month of December. In January, the comedic *Charitable Sisterhood of the Second Trinity Victory Church* takes the stage. Laugh it up some more this February with *The Kitchen Witches*. For a detailed look at the schedule, visit Kt-Online.org.

JAN–FEB 2018

☀️ AUDUBON ADVENTURE FILM SERIES

Each year, the Bay County Audubon Society hosts a special viewing of three enlightening, environmentally oriented



films at Arnold High School's auditorium. Throughout selected days of January—February, families are invited to attend each film for an educational experience and the opportunity to have their name drawn at intermission for door prizes. Admission to each film is \$7, but a season pass may be purchased for \$20. All proceeds will go to the St. Joe Community Foundation, an organization dedicated to improving Bay and Walton Counties' environment, infrastructure and health. BayCountyAudubon.org/Projects.html

JAN 23, 2018

❄️ WINTER RESIDENT HOMECOMING

A more casual cousin to the Winter Resident Senior Prom, 2018's homecoming is one of the most anticipated social events of the season!

PCB's legendary DJ Jim Lawson will be providing the tunes, while seniors swing and groove the night away! This year's event will be held at Laketown Wharf Resort, from 4–9 p.m.

FEB 9–10, 2018

❄️ PANAMA CITY BEACH MARDI GRAS & MUSIC FESTIVAL

Forget travelling all the way to New Orleans for Mardi Gras. Pier Park brings the French Quarter right to the beach! The krewe of Dominique Youx pirates will lead a parade full of flying beads, jazzy beats and snazzy costumes. Live music will be a constant at Aaron Bessant Park, as soulful singers take the stage and fuel the spirit of the festival. You'll want to tilt your head to the sky once night falls, as purple, green and gold fireworks enchant the evening.

FEB 13, 2018

❄️ WINTER RESIDENT SENIOR PROM

Grab your date and put on your dancin' shoes for this special event, held at Edgewater Beach & Golf Resort in Panama City Beach on the evening before Valentine's Day. A prom king and queen will be crowned, and a buffet will be served.

FEB 26, 2018

❄️ WINTER RESIDENT GRANDE FINALE

Spring is in the air, so join your snowbird friends for one last hurrah at the Winter Resident Grand Finale, held at Sheraton Bay Point Resort. Entertainment includes Todd Allen Herendeen and the FTD (Follow the Dog) Band. Are you ready to twist and shout? ●



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THAT'S THE latitude and longitude for Panama City Beach, Florida, a world-class fishing destination with easy access to year-round angling opportunities.

What do you dream of reeling in? Do you see yourself chasing a big cobia or pulling a large grouper or snapper up off of 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.



'CHASIN' THE SUN'

Fishing show wins award, wins over viewers

BY STEVE BORNHOFT

FRESH FROM A MIDSUMMER SHOOT that focused on fishing for mangrove snapper, Capt. Justin Leake finished rinsing off his skiff and began to look forward to cooler weather.

The spring of 2017 presented conditions that were ideal for redfish. Plus, lots of pompanos were about. Conditions remained favorable into the summer with the exception of a couple of rainy weeks in July that clouded the water and put a damper on tarpon fishing. Even at that, the water cleared within two weeks after the rains subsided.

Bait, speckled trout and redfish were all plentiful throughout the summer, according to Capt. Nathan Chennaux, portending great fishing as the water cools.

Chennaux, blogging for VisitPanamaCityBeach.com, reported that summer schools of trout and redfish smashed into schools of bait gathered around points and on the grass flats. Reds hung out at their usual haunts — bridges and the pass — and were scattered, as well, throughout the bay system, blowing up on juvenile blue crabs.

In low-light conditions, Chennaux (CaptainNate@BayCountyOutdoors.com) favors topwater presentations. He switches to jig-head/plastic combos and diving or suspending plugs as the sun gets higher in the sky. He may resort to live baits when cloudless skies combine with clear water to make fish finicky. That pattern often persists until well after jacket weather arrives.



SCOTT WEBB

INSHORE ACTION
Many Bay County anglers congregate around fish-attracting jetties while others favor sight-fishing for species including redfish and tarpon.

Late summer and early fall is the time for mangrove snapper, which eagerly devour natural baits and provide fine action on light tackle.

As Leake often notes, one of the delightful attributes about reds and specks is that they can be pursued 12 months out of the year in waters ranging from skinny to a few feet in depth.

But, ah November. Water remains warm, but not hot, dropping into the mid-70s along bay shores and the beach.

“That’s the comfort zone for the fish we like to target,” Leake said, noting that in addition to reds and specks, pompano, king mackerel and flounder bend rods late in the year.

“As of the first of November, most of the flounder have migrated from the bays to the bridge spans and other nearshore artificial reefs in the Gulf,” Leake said. “We start to get a lot of northerly winds that flatten out the Gulf from



"We've had a great year. But I can't wait for November and December. They are probably my favorite fishing months of the year. As good as fishing has been, it will get even better then."

— Justin Leake, the host of the Chasin' the Sun fishing show

the beach to about two miles offshore. That makes for ideal flounder fishing because, with a calm sea, you can detect the bite that much more easily.

"I like to fish for flounder with live baits, enough weight to keep the bait on the bottom and about a foot of fluorocarbon leader."

"Chasin' the Sun" aired on Destination America and NBC Sports for the first six months of 2017 before moving to Panama City's ABC affiliate, WMBB. As of Jan. 1, the program will move to the Discovery Channel and its considerable audience. The network reaches nearly 100 million households and, as of December 2016, was the No. 1 non-sports network among



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men in the U.S. and was home to nine of the top 10 unscripted shows in the country.

“We’re pleased that ‘Chasin’ the Sun’ will be joining the Discovery Channel’s Saturday morning lineup next year,” Dan Rowe, the president and CEO of Visit Panama City Beach enthused. “The show is a great example of how we share the wonderful story of Panama City Beach and it is beautifully produced.”

“We’ve had a great year,” said Leake, the host of the Telly Award-winning “Chasin’ the Sun” fishing show, currently airing on Saturdays on WMBB-TV in Panama City. “But I can’t wait for November and December. They are probably my favorite

fishing months of the year. As good as fishing has been, it will get even better then.”

Indeed, “Chasin’ the Sun” was awarded a 2017 Silver Telly award for broadcast excellence in the Travel/Tourism category.

Founded in 1979, the Telly Awards honor outstanding local, regional and cable TV commercials and programs; video and film productions; and web commercials, videos and films. On average, the Telly Awards receive over 13,000 entries annually from all 50 states and numerous foreign countries. Less than ten percent of entries are chosen as winners of the Silver Telly, the highest honor.

Leake is satisfied that the show, while

winning accolades, has done much to accomplish its goal of luring tourists to Panama City Beach. He is in a position to know. Leake operates Panama City Inshore, a guide service that involves six captains.

“We’re at capacity for the year,” Leake said, “and many of the clients we are seeing booked trips to Panama City Beach for the first time in response to the fishing show. Some of our established customers are not used to having to book trips way in advance, but it’s getting to the point now where the minute you step off the boat from this year’s trip, you need to be booking next year’s.” ●



KEEPING TRACK OF THE TIDES

When planning activities on the water, consider the moon's influence

BY HANNAH BURKE

IN PANAMA CITY BEACH, the coast is struck by multiple “tidal waves” a day. Beachgoers are unfazed, however, as these waves are no more disruptive than radio waves.

Contrary to the popular connotation, tidal waves aren't roaring tsunamis, but rather the daily rise and fall of salty surfaces. You know, the ones caused by the gravitational pull of the sun and the moon you learned about in 5th grade science class?

Let's delve a little deeper than the basics. You're standing on a beach that happens to be on the side of our planet directly facing the moon. This celestial body acts like a magnet, exerting a gravitational force strong enough to create a tidal “bulge.” You would be witnessing high tide, when water levels reach their daily peak.

On the opposite side of the globe, the same process is underway. If you stick with our magnet analogy, visualize the force

squeezing our typically spherical planet into an oval, creating bulges on each side. Areas that don't currently lie within these two bulges experience low tide as water is sucked away from shorelines. Because the Earth is in constant rotation and is orbited by the moon, most coasts experience two high and low tides per day as they pass in and out of tidal bulges.

However, Panama City Beach is unique, as it only experiences diurnal tides — one

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.



“When catching bait around the shipping channel in the morning, an incoming tide will bring clean water inside the pass and make for good bait catching and mackerel fishing. A falling tide will bring water out of the bay and sometimes push fish off the beach.” — Capt. Benjamin Kelley, owner of PCB's Miss Kelley Fishing Charters



high and one low tide during a 24-hour rotation. These wave periods only occur in Antarctica, Australia and certain points along the Gulf of Mexico due to massive chunks of continental land obstructing the path of tidal bulges. Despite having only a diurnal pattern to track, it is important to many in Panama City Beach to pay close attention to water levels and movements.

Capt. Benjamin Kelley, owner of PCB's Miss Kelley Fishing Charters, always keeps his eye on the tides before taking his boat out.

“When catching bait around the shipping channel in the morning, an incoming tide will bring clean water inside the pass and make for good bait catching and mackerel fishing,” Kelley explains. “A falling tide will bring water out of the bay and

sometimes push fish off the beach.”

Luckily, his deep-sea fishing charters are rarely affected by the tides. It is small boats that participate in light-tackle fishing, Kelley says, that really need to study the tide tables. At one moment, you could be peacefully motoring along. At another, retreating seawater may expose jetties and shallow sandbars.

Fish, divers and snorkelers all prefer to avoid having to swim against the tide. Fortunately, divemasters in and around Panama City Beach are experienced in navigating around these ebbs and flows. Dive shops are prepared to supply independent adventurers with the information they need and, thankfully, tidal data is readily available from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).



TIDAL SCIENCE Water gauges positioned throughout coastal U.S. waters enable scientists to accurately predict tides many years in advance.

“The nice thing about tides is that they occur in a steadily regular way. If we station a gauge in Panama City Beach and examine that data for a year, we are able to pull out the tide signature and predict how it will behave going forward in time.” — Dr. Greg Dusek, senior scientist for NOAA’s Tides and Currents Office



Dr. Greg Dusek is the senior scientist for NOAA’s Tides and Currents Office. Operating out of Silver Spring, Maryland, he is responsible for monitoring more than 200 water gauges across the U.S. that record information about water levels. From those observations, he is able to make tidal predictions for not only tomorrow, but dozens of years in advance.

“The nice thing about tides is that they occur in a steadily regular way,” Dusek says. “If we station a gauge in Panama City Beach and examine that data for a year, we are able to pull out the tide signature and predict how it will behave going forward in time.”

Sensors on these gauges measure the water every six minutes for a reliable read. Currently, these devices are transitioning to incorporate “microwave” sensors, technology that will float above the surface and use microwave radar waves to scan the waters and acquire its precise level.

Also in development is new research that will utilize a wave model to predict the likelihood of what locals refer to as a “riptide.” Dusek clarifies that these aren’t a tidal phenomenon at all, but powerful currents that can pose a threat to swimmers. Low tides tend to influence stronger rip currents as waves continuously break over sand bars, but swimmers should not rely upon this information alone to avoid rips.

To make the most of your day on the water and ensure safe travels, visit TidesAndCurrents.Noaa.Gov for daily tidal readings of Panama City Beach. ●

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Birds

OF A FEATHER

Winter residents gather at events planned especially for them

BY HANNAH BURKE

Among the various winter destinations available to residents of northern climates seeking a respite from the cold, Panama City Beach is not the warmest — that is, in terms of average outdoor temperature. But the home of the World's Most Beautiful Beaches strives to extend the warmest hospitality anywhere to its winter visitors.

That sincere embrace is a product of a long-running relationship. In decades past, winter visitors arriving primarily from Canada populated hotels along the beach that offered monthly rates. More recently, people from Midwestern states have made up the majority of winter visitors, and hotel stays have given way to stays at condominium developments, many of them offering amenities geared toward seniors.

Always, Panama City Beach has reached out to winter visitors and endeavored to make them feel appreciated. And, over time, the number of events planned with winter visitors in mind has grown. Here are a few ...





HAND IN HAND Winter residents and Panama City Beach have long had a close relationship. By way of appreciation, the city and beach businesses hold events that unite groups of visitors from the northern U.S. and Canada.

WINTER RESIDENT APPRECIATION DAYS

Hosted by Visit Panama City Beach in the Lyndell Building at the PCB Senior Center, Appreciation Days provide additional opportunities for winter residents to meet up. "They serve to reunite everyone," says Barrie Ainslie, Director of Visitor Services at PCB's Visitor Information Center. "They provide the opportunity for winter residents to reconnect with their seasonal community by meeting old friends and making new ones while learning about all of the winter adventures that await them." *Tickets for other winter resident events — the Homecoming, Senior Prom and Grand Finale dances/socials — are sold at Appreciation Days, and businesses line up for the chance to introduce themselves to winter residents. Complimentary coffee and doughnuts are enjoyed by all.*

Thursday, Jan. 18, 8–11 a.m.
Thursday, Feb. 8, 8–11 a.m.
Thursday, Feb. 22, 8–11 a.m.

WINTER RESIDENT HOMECOMING DANCE

For winter residents spending their first season in Panama City Beach or their 10th, Winter Resident Homecoming provides a warm welcome for all who make Panama City Beach their temporary home. This year's social will be held at Laketown Wharf's exquisite Event Center, a spacious venue with plenty of room for mingling, noshing and boogying to live music from DJ Jim Lawson. Unlike the ensuing Winter Resident Senior Prom, attendees can come casual to this five-hour bash where folks craft friendships that will last for years to come. *Tickets go on sale Thursday, Jan. 18, at the PCB Senior Center.*

Tuesday, Jan. 23, 4–9 p.m.

PCB MARDI GRAS AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

Combine the excitement of an authentic Mardi Gras celebration with spectacular views of emerald green water and sugar white sand, and you're in for a spectacular and slightly rambunctious treat. Held in conjunction with the Krewe of Dominique Youx's great Mardi Gras at the Beach parade, the festival takes place the weekend before Fat Tuesday and features entertainment for the whole family.

Feb. 9–10

WINTER RESIDENT SENIOR PROM

Each February, winter residents retrieve formal wear from the recesses of their closets and turn out for the social event of the season. Dinner and dancing lead up to the announcement of the prom king and queen.

Edgewater Beach and Golf Resort
Tuesday, Feb. 13, 4–9 p.m.

WINTER RESIDENT GRAND FINALE

Culminating the winter season, this event serves as a farewell and as an expression of appreciation for visitors who trade snowdrifts for sand dunes each year and make Panama City Beach their temporary home. The finale is a grand one, featuring activities and entertainment that will be talked about throughout the spring, summer and fall until it comes time to return to the Gulf Coast.

Sheraton Bay Point Resort
Monday, Feb. 26, 4–9 p.m.

WINTER RESIDENT STATE DAY GATHERINGS

Breakers restaurant, an establishment that predates restaurateur Jack Bishop's current businesses, was the longtime host of Wisconsin,

WINTER ROYALTY The annual Winter Resident Senior Prom is a formal affair presided over by a duly elected king and queen. In 2015, Jack and Louise Mitchell, reigned supreme.



Minnesota, Michigan and Canadian Appreciation Days. After Breakers closed in 2013, Bishop revved the State Day tradition back up at his new restaurant, Harpoon Harry's. This season marks Harpoon Harry's fourth year in business, and this winter's lineup is anticipated to be even grander than the last.

Each resident purchases a \$15 ticket upon arriving at Harpoon Harry's at 11 a.m. The ticket makes them eligible for door prize drawings, along with a three-course buffet luncheon and abundant networking opportunities. Once bellies are full, spouses (and strangers) pair up to dance the polka, or move to other musical genres that are popular back home.

After prizes are awarded, a local dignitary speaks to the audience about Panama City Beach and solicits suggestions for how the area can better accommodate winter residents.

"We want to be a desirable area for our winter guests and keep their numbers growing," Bishop says. "I remember when I first started this, Canadians made up about 60 percent of our winter visitors. They're the ones who inspired me to get involved with winter guests.

I am from Upper Michigan, and they were right across the border. When I see them now, we always like to talk a little hockey and catch up."

Jim and Connie Demulling have been traveling from Wisconsin to Panama City Beach for the past 14 years to spend their winters. The couple is highly active in winter resident activities and has served as the Winter Resident Senior Prom's king and queen in the past.

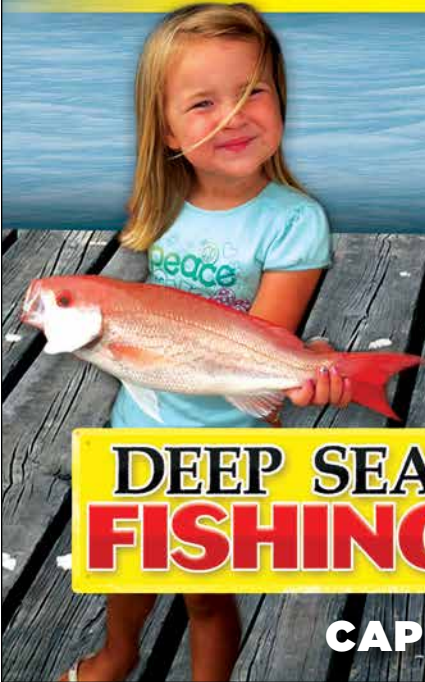
"We really love looking out at the beautiful beaches of the Gulf while we enjoy great food and fellowship," Connie Demulling says.

"On Wisconsin Days, fellow Wisconsinites play musical instruments while we sing along to our favorite state songs, and the food is always delicious. It seems like there are people from all parts of the state who have found out that these are some of the best beaches in America. Why not come and enjoy them to get away from the cold weather our state has during January and February?"

Wisconsin Day #1, Feb. 20
Wisconsin Day #2, Feb. 22
Michigan Day, Feb. 21
Minnesota Day, Feb. 15
Canadian Snowbird Day, Feb. 23 ●

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Cajun on the Coast

THERE'S A WHOLE LOT OF SOUL GOIN' DOWN

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

There's a certain charm at work in the cuisine classic to Louisiana, a rich roux of heart and soul whose recipes have been passed down from generation to generation. And it's that undeniably special blend of magic that seems to cast its spell with just one bite, a deft layering of herbs and spices that unlocks the mystic complexity of even the most humble ingredients to make them a celebration of flavors that parade across the tongue. And while a trip to the Big Easy might not be in your plans for the day, getting a bite of the bayou won't require leaving the shores of Panama City Beach, where Creole soul is jazzing up the culinary scene to bring a little bit of the French Quarter to the Emerald Coast.

BAYOU ON THE BEACH CAFÉ AND OYSTER BAR

Since opening in 1999, Bayou on the Beach Café and Oyster Bar has been a family endeavor, first owned by a couple from Lafayette, Louisiana, with Cajun spices running through their veins. And that legacy was passed on to their son and daughter-in-law, Jordan and Maria Buxton, who now own the restaurant and keep the Creole soul going strong in this down-home jambalaya joint where every bite is a tasty trip back to the bayou. Among their top tempters are the Who Dat Shrimp; Boiled Royal Red Shrimp; the Seafood Muffaletta; boiled mudbugs; and oysters served raw, baked or chargrilled to perfection. Based on Mama Buxton's recipes, everything from the sauces to the boudin balls is made fresh from scratch. From the gumbo to the beignets, this is one bayou you'll want to get down to. *11115 Hutchison Blvd., (850) 249-3478, BayouOnTheBeachCafe.com*

DAT CAJUN PLACE

Starting with appetizers like fried Boudin Balls and Gator Bites, the menu at Dat Cajun Place is like a second line through the Quarter, jazzing things up even more with Cajun specialties like po'boys, red beans and rice, and their very own variation on the mufalletta. And when owners Jan and Trudy White left their

DAT CAJUN PLACE
owners Trudy and Jan White demonstrate that you can take a Cajun out of bayou country, but you can't much take the Creole out of the Cajun. They have found that their family gumbo recipe is as popular in Panama City Beach as it was back home in Louisiana.





DEE'S HANG OUT

HOLLY GARDNER

home in the bayou country to rebuild a post-Katrina life here on the Emerald Coast, the restaurant they opened in 2012 definitely did their home state proud, showing Creole cooking off at its finest with an award-winning Chicken and Andouille Sausage Gumbo so addictive you'll swear there's voodoo in the roux. Letting the good times roll on with an oyster bar shuck-full of delicious variations as well as entrées like Crawfish Étouffée and Chicken Orleans, dat's definitely one Cajun place you'll want in your flavor parade. *8501 Thomas Drive, (850) 588-5314, DatCajunPlace.com*

DEE'S HANG OUT

Taking a decided lack of Cajun restaurants in the area as reason enough to open one for themselves, husband and wife team Dee and Brenda Brown started Dee's Hangout in 2008 to create a place that would blend Southern coastal fare with Cajun classics, loading their menu with fresh seafood straight from the Gulf and dishes that make hanging out and digging in a truly tasty way to spend the day. And they do things right, with three kinds of etoufee bursting with chicken, shrimp or crawfish; two jammin' jambalayas; po'boys; spicy red beans and rice; chicken or seafood gumbo; and even a Cajun Platter that's a triple feature of étouffée, gumbo and crispy fried catfish served with a mound of creamy coleslaw. Sweetening up the deal, Dee's has New Orleans-style bread pudding soaked in butter rum sauce that's definitely worth getting jazzed over. *529 N. Richard Jackson Blvd., (850) 249-4264, DeesHangOut.com*

HOOK'D PIER BAR & GRILL

Opening her own beachside shanty full of fresh seafood and a tidal wave of coastal cuisine in 2010, owner Christine McLaughlin decided her menu could do with a little bit of bayou flavor and added a few Nawlins classics like shrimp po'boys and gumbo so authentic you know from the first bite that she's got a red-blooded Cajun in her kitchen. Using a classic dark roux, their scratch-made gumbo is full of fresh seafood, spicy sausage, chicken and veggies kicked up with a special blend of spices, all served over rice with toasted baguettes to sop up all that saucy goodness. No matter what's on order, Hook'd will get you hooked and coming back for more. *16201 Front Beach Road, (850) 233-8232, HookedPierBar.com*

MIKE'S CAFE & OYSTER BAR

Building on more than 40 years of experience running a successful donut shop and diner, owner Mike Thomas expanded his repertoire to open Mike's Café & Oyster Bar in 2011, bolstering his menu to offer new dishes that perfectly showcased the fantastic seafood and fish at his fingertips and spicing things up with a few Creole-style favorites like rich gumbo packed with seafood, okra and Andouille sausage; po'boys piled high with fried shrimp and oysters; and red fish étouffée. And while a bulk of their focus might often go to the mollusks on the menu, the bayou bites at Mike's just might make you come out of your shell. *17554 Front Beach Road, (850) 234-1942, MikesCafeandOysterBar.com*

PINEAPPLE WILLY'S

While their award-winning Jack Daniel's barbecue ribs may have made them "World Famous" ever since owner Bill Buskell opened this family-friendly joint overlooking the Gulf in the mid-80s, Pineapple Willy's blends island-inspired cuisine with the perfect kick of Cajun flavor to get some bayou boogie in on the mix. And with four variations on Nawlins-style po'boys piled high with your choice of juicy chicken; golden-fried shrimp; tender, flaky fish; or fried oysters topped with lettuce and tomato, they prove their po'boys are rich in tasty fixins. For something to get saucy over, order up the Nawlins Roast Beef & Debris Po' Boy, a hefty specimen made with slow-roasted beef smothered in scratch-made gravy and topped with a scatter of lettuce and tomato. A slice of downtown NOLA is their "French Quarter" Dip layered up with freshly sliced roast beef and Swiss cheese and served with a side of au jus. But no trip to Cajun country would be complete without jambalaya, and Pineapple Willy's does the dish with great panache, loading theirs with chicken, spicy sausage and five grilled shrimp. One bite of the food, and you might just think that Pineapple Willy's has some "Who Dat" running through its veins. *9875 S. Thomas Drive, (850) 235-0928, PineappleWillys.com*

SALTY SUE'S

After a fire destroyed their first restaurant in 2007, the Knowles family hit the refresh button to open Salty Sue's in 2008, serving some of the best seafood, steaks and barbecue on the beach. And, when it comes to adding some Creole spice to the mix, this is one local joint that knows how to give roux its due. Offering scratch-made gumbo packed with shrimp, smoked chicken and Andouille sausage topped off with golden fried okra and served over rice, the menu dishes up some low-country love; and their creamy, cheesy Cajun-Style Shrimp & Grits are a mouthful of mystic flavors that'll definitely put you under their spell. From first bite to last, Salty Sue's gets down to the bayou without ever having to leave the beach. *17501 Back Beach Road, (850) 234-8485, SaltySues.com* ●





DAT TIME O' YEAR

Put a little spice in your life Feb. 9–10, 2018, when the Big Easy hits the beach for Mardi Gras festivities and a parade of fun that sets the season off in style. Boasting more than 80 floats; fantastic live music; and family-friendly attractions including costume contests, fireworks and races that really Let the Good Times Roll, the annual Panama City Beach Mardi Gras and Music Festival is one jazzy way to spend a weekend. For more information on the event schedule, visit VisitPanamaCityBeach.com/mardigras or call (850) 233-5070.





SAND IS CURRENCY
Projects like this one at Panama City Beach replenish beaches to the benefit of the tourism industry and also serve to protect upland properties for storm surges.

An aerial photograph showing a beach nourishment project. Several large, dark, cylindrical pipes are laid out on a sandy beach. A person is visible on a yellow platform near one of the pipes. In the foreground, a large, white, foamy wave is breaking. The background shows the ocean and a sandy beach with some birds flying.

KEEPING EROSION AT BAY

Beach nourishment pumps sand – and tourism dollars – onto Panhandle beaches

STORY BY AUDREY POST // PHOTOS BY CHRIS HERMANS

For most people who aren't fortunate enough to live in the Sunshine State, the word "Florida" conjures visions of just one vista: sandy beaches and palm trees.

The state boasts 1,197 miles of coastline, with 825 miles of it sandy beaches along the Atlantic Ocean, Straits of Florida and Gulf of Mexico.

Visit Florida, the state's tourism marketing agency, promotes 227 miles of Panhandle beaches, stretching from St. George Island off Apalachicola westward to Pensacola.

Tourism is the economic engine of the region and the beaches are its primary fuel, but that fuel doesn't come without a cost. Beach erosion is a constant and ongoing concern.

The term “shifting sands” may be used to describe loose political alliances and other situations in flux, but its origins lie in the ebb and flow of the tides and how they affect the sands both on the beach and offshore. Tidal movements shift sand along the shoreline and out to sea, and periodic storms dump it back on shore. It’s not a swift process, but it’s normally not a problem unless the sand can no longer follow a natural course because of construction or other development. If the waves crash into obstacles instead of gradually running up on shore, the sand they carry is not deposited and instead recedes with the wave, lost beyond offshore sandbars. The result is beach erosion.

According to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, which monitors and maps beach erosion around the state, the length of critically eroded beachfront increased by 70.7 miles from 2000 to 2010, from 327.9 miles to 398.6 miles. The length of non-critically eroded beach decreased slightly, by a total of 12.1 miles, largely because of nourishment operations.

STATEWIDE LEADER

“The Panama City Beach nourishment program has established itself as a leader in the State of Florida in maintaining a healthy beach,” noted Lisa Armbruster,



“THE BEACHES ARE ALWAYS THERE, AS LONG AS YOU DON’T TRY TO KEEP THEM FROM MOVING. BUT THEN THERE IS THE MATTER OF HOUSES. THAT’S WHERE THE PROBLEM COMES IN, NOT FROM EROSION, BUT FROM HUMANS LIKING THEIR PROPERTY TO STAY WHERE IT IS.”
— COURTNEY HACKNEY, PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

the beach consultant to the Bay County Tourist Development Council. “Hurricane Opal caused significant erosion of the beaches in 1995 and left very little dry beach along much of the Panama City Beaches. To combat this erosion, as well as erosion from storms since then, the beach nourishment program was established.”

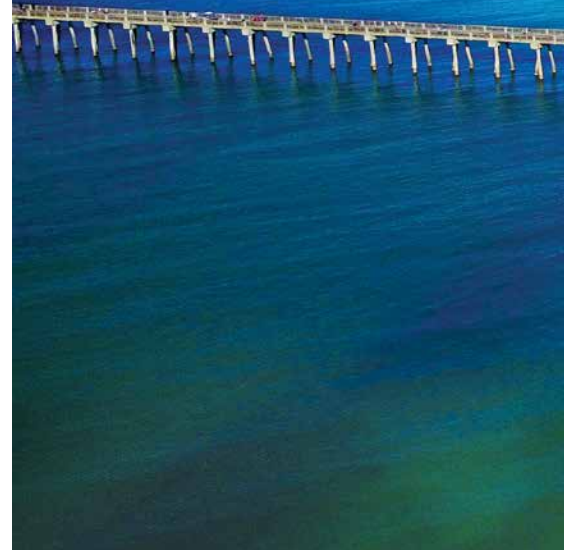
The beaches of Panama City Beach seen today are the result of four nourishment projects — one completed in 1998/1999, the second in 2005/2006, the third in 2011, and the final one just completed in May 2017. These projects not only provide recreational beach width for the benefit of residents and visitors, but during storm events, the sand provides critical protection for structures and infrastructure landward of the beach. In addition, a healthy beach provides nesting areas for species such as sea turtles and shorebirds. This beach nourishment management program is much like a roadway or other such infrastructure; once it is built, it must be maintained.

The initial restoration of the Panama City Beaches in 1998-1999 placed approximately 9.8 million cubic yards of sand along the 18.5 miles of beaches. The 2005-2006 project placed approximately 3.3 million cubic yards of sand along 17.5 miles of beaches, and it was conducted in response to 2004’s Hurricane Ivan. The 2011 project placed approximately 1.3 million cubic yards of sand along a total of 7.5 miles of the beaches (east and west ends) and was referred to as a “repair” project as it was conducted in response to several storms following Hurricane Ivan. The 2017 project, which was completed in May, was a little smaller than the 2011

project and is being called an “interim” project as it did not encompass the entire shoreline like the first two projects. The 2017 project placed 840,000 cubic yards of sand along four different project segments — referred to as Pinnacle Port, City Pier, County Pier and Treasure Island — that totaled approximately 4 miles. The 2017

RIBBON OF SAND

Beach restoration involves rebuilding a beach that is badly eroded. Rising sea levels may increase the need for such projects.

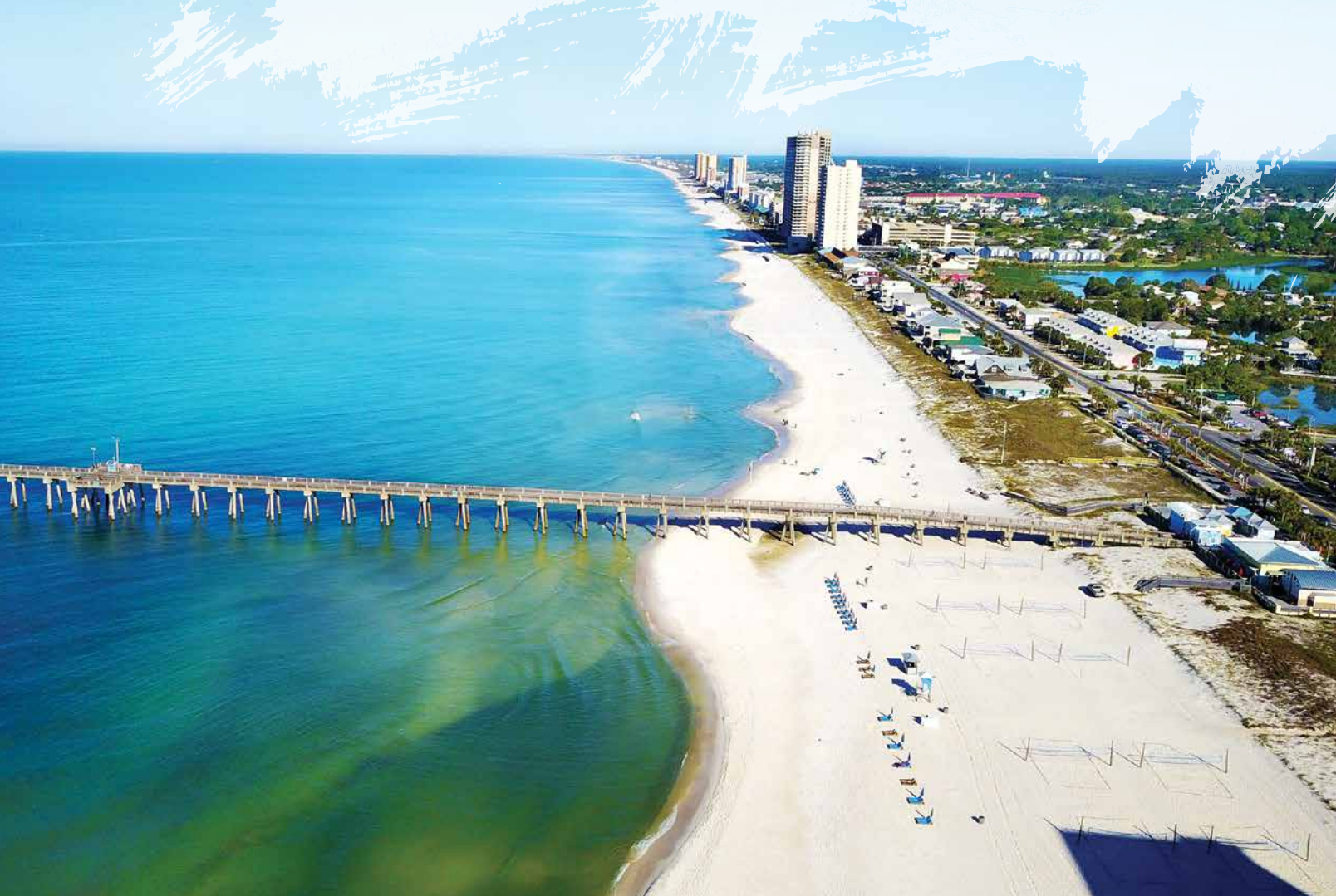


project was deemed necessary due to the eroded condition of the four segments and should increase the longevity of the entire 18.5 mile project area, thus delaying the need for the next full nourishment.

HOW BEACH NOURISHMENT WORKS

Beach nourishment projects take sand from offshore sites beyond the sandbars and dump it onto eroded coastal shores. The harvest areas, called “borrow areas,” have to be thoroughly checked by coastal engineering experts to make sure the harvest won’t cause additional problems, and the sand to be harvested is made up of grains of the appropriate size and color to blend with the area where it will be placed. Companies harvesting the sand must obtain state permits before dredging can begin.

The borrow areas from which sand is harvested for Panama City Beach projects were identified by coastal engineers after detailed and extensive study of offshore areas to ensure that the sand is the best possible match to the existing beach.



The main borrow area used for the 2017 project was located approximately 3.5 miles offshore of the Thomas Drive area, with a secondary borrow area near the St. Andrews Bay entrance channel. The St. Andrews Bay entrance channel and a large borrow area offshore Shell Island are permitted for future projects.

If the “borrow area” is close enough to shore, the dredged sand is dumped directly into a submerged pipeline that runs up onto the shore. The pipe from offshore connects to another pipeline on the beach, which runs laterally along the shore. The watery sand, called a slurry, is discharged onto the beach and moved around by bulldozers to create the beach design — width and depth — called for in the beach management plan.

If the “borrow area” is farther offshore, far enough to make a direct pipeline unworkable or inefficient, the dredged sand is deposited into a hopper dredge, a barge-like vessel with a holding compartment for the sand. The hopper dredge then carries

the sand from the borrow area to a pipeline closer to the project site. Once the sand is in the pipeline, the process is the same.

Because of the “shifting sands,” beach management is an ongoing process. Long-term beach management plans call for restoration, then periodic renourishment of the shoreline. The beaches are monitored to evaluate how much sand remains each year. With this information, the next nourishment project can be anticipated and planned for, although a large storm event can significantly erode beach sand and push forward the schedule.

HOW BEACH NOURISHMENT IS FUNDED

The state of Florida launched its beach nourishment program in 1986, when the Legislature adopted a comprehensive beach planning and protection program. The Florida Beach Management Funding Assistance Program combines the efforts of local, state and federal government entities to protect, preserve and restore beaches. It provides up to 50 percent

of project costs to local governments, community development districts or special taxing districts.

Since 1998, when the Legislature funded the program by dedicating a portion of the Ecosystem Management and Restoration Trust Fund for beach management, more than \$626.6 million has been appropriated for projects including beach restoration, project design, environmental studies and monitoring, inlet management, sand transfer management and dune restoration, said Dee Ann Miller of the DEP’s press office. Each level of government usually pays one-third of the cost of the entire program.

As of 2016, the program has funded restoration and follow-up maintenance of more than 225 miles of critically eroded beaches since its inception. Maintaining beaches keeps them attractive as vacation destinations for tourists, according to the DEP, but there are other benefits, as well: “Healthy beaches protect public infrastructure and private upland

development, provide critical habitat for many endangered and threatened species and secure recreational and economic interests along the state's sandy shoreline."

These beach nourishment projects are funded through partnerships among various levels of government. Some projects qualify for federal funding under national coastal management programs;

studies; building and installing erosion-control structures; and monitoring and documenting the effectiveness of the project and any potential effects from it. "Beach restoration" involves rebuilding a beach that has been severely eroded. "Beach renourishment" is the routine maintenance necessary to keep that restored beach healthy so it can weather storms, provide

projects. The request list was compiled based on requests from local governments and prioritized by DEP based on a number of factors, including status of permits, readiness to proceed and whether the amount requested seems to be in line with the proposed project.

Bay County requested \$4.6 million in state funds to design and nourish "hotspots" of erosion along 17.7 miles of coastline, as well as monitor the work for the first year afterward. The area includes the Panama City Beach and St. Andrews State Park and is part of a long-range federal shore-protection project that is partially eligible for state funding. The local contribution is a little over \$9.2 million.

With all nourishment projects, monitoring is important and the process will have to be repeated, sometimes sooner rather than later, to keep the beaches in good condition. As Courtney Hackney, Director of Coastal Biology and Professor of Biology at the University of North Florida, told the *Florida Times-Union* in 2015, "The beaches are always there, as long as you don't try to stop the beach from moving." ●

BAY COUNTY REQUESTED **\$4.6 MILLION** IN STATE FUNDS TO DESIGN AND NOURISH "HOTSPOTS" OF EROSION ALONG **17.7 MILES** OF COASTLINE, AS WELL AS MONITOR THE WORK FOR THE FIRST YEAR AFTERWARD. THE AREA INCLUDES THE PANAMA CITY BEACHES AND ST. ANDREWS STATE PARK AND IS PART OF A LONG-RANGE FEDERAL SHORE-PROTECTION PROJECT THAT IS PARTIALLY ELIGIBLE FOR STATE FUNDING. THE LOCAL CONTRIBUTION IS A LITTLE OVER **\$9.2 MILLION**.

almost all qualify for partial state funding, with local costs paid for by "bed taxes," sales taxes that tourists pay on short-term hotel, motel and condominium rentals.

The state's beach management program helps pay for various steps in the process, including feasibility and design

recreational space and protect wildlife habitat. Both involve dredging sand offshore and pumping back onto the beaches.

DEP requested almost \$73 million in coastal management funding for fiscal year 2017-18, about \$50 million for beach management projects and the rest for inlet



COASTAL CASUALS

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STATE GROUPERS

BY STEVE BORNHOFT ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN RUSSO

THEY LIE IN WAIT along underwater highways, and whenever prey fish fail to maintain a minimum speed, they have their lunch. Like a gator lazing on a bank or a largemouth bass slowly finning to maintain its position beneath a stand of lily pads, groupers can appear lethargic, but they explode from their hiding places with maws wide open as soon as opportunity presents itself.

Groupers inhabit waters off the whole of Florida, but in the northern gulf, three species — gag (or black), red and scamp grouper predominate. Area waters grow giant goliath grouper, too, fat boys that frequently hang at the jetties at the entrance to St. Andrew Bay or on nearshore sunken bridge spans.

Bottom fishermen often favor red snapper to groupers, but that's a matter of color, not taste. (When is the last time you saw a blackened snapper sandwich on a menu?) The delicate, flaky flesh of groupers is almost too good to fry. It doesn't require much. Salt, pepper, butter and a little Cavender's will do.

Chefs are divided about the relative merits of red and gag grouper — reds, which are sometimes called "buzzards" because of the odor that emanates from them when they are landed, are milder in flavor — but all can agree that scamp are primo; indeed, they are a signature dish at the perennial Golden Spoon Award-winning Capt. Anderson's Restaurant on Grand Lagoon.

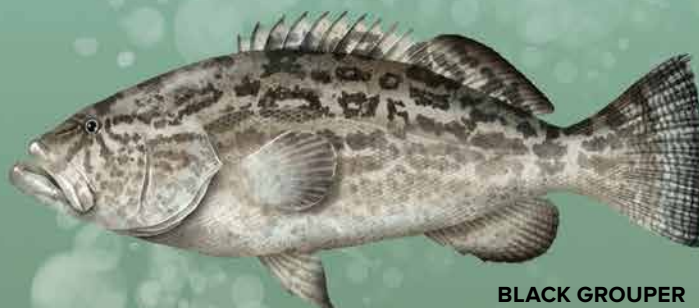
The goliath grouper doesn't figure in the dinner-table conversation; it is protected from harvest in both state and federal waters and ranges in size to more than 700 pounds. Bold is the fisherman who sends a large, frisky live bait to the bottom; he just might tie into more than he bargained for. ●



SCAMP GROUPE



RED GROUPE



BLACK GROUPE



GOLIATH GROUPE



LIFELONG LEARNERS

Student of age 50 and better learn new skills, stay current and expand their horizons when attending Education Encore classes at Gulf Coast State College.

Encore!

Gulf Coast State College offers lifelong learning to seasonal visitors and year-round residents

BY KIM HARRIS THACKER

Are you an active adult interested in acquiring a new skill or studying an unfamiliar topic? Do you like the idea of learning without the stress of maintaining certain grades? Do you vacation or live in Florida? If you answered “yes” to these questions, you’re a prime candidate for Gulf Coast State College’s Education Encore program.

Offered by the Corporate College Department and operated on a volunteer basis by the Education Encore Advisory Council, the Encore program provides non-credit enrichment classes for adults during the fall and spring semesters at Gulf Coast State College’s Panama City campus.

Study topics for each 75-minute class include what Pamela Kidwell, director of the Corporate College and Business Innovation Center, refers to as a blend of tried-and-true favorites and a healthy selection of new offerings.

“We present the adult population with a wide selection of classes designed specifically with them in mind,” she says. “Members of the Education Encore

Advisory Council take the time to survey the participants, research their findings and put together a game plan for each term.”

Norman Capra, of Panama City Beach, has served on this advisory council for two years. A retired university professor and vice-president of the Bay County Audubon Society, Capra also has taught basic and advanced concepts of birding in the Encore program. He explains that with offerings such as metalworking, astronomy, genealogy, photography, chair yoga, sea life and creative writing, there are classes to suit many interests.

“Heck, you can even learn to play the ukulele,” he says.

Alice Conniff is secretary of the Education Encore Advisory Council. She has taken courses with Encore for four years and considers history of musical theatre one of her favorites. She has long been a theatre buff, but until she enrolled in Encore, she hadn’t studied the history behind the performance art.

“When people get to their senior years, they want to do the things they weren’t able to do when they were younger, because they just didn’t have the time or the freedom,” she says. “When you get older, you get to start thinking about your own interests.”

The goal of the Encore program is to provide active adults with a learning



SNOWBIRDS IN CLASS

THE EDUCATION ENCORE

program is not just for Florida residents. It's for all adults, regardless of residency status.

"Spring is our biggest semester, because we have snowbirds here," says Alice Conniff, Secretary of the Education Encore Advisory Council. "Our enrollment numbers double or triple from the fall to the spring semester. We even have snowbirds on the advisory council. They may not be here all year, but when they are here, they work hard to make the program succeed."

Trudy and Jerry Rasmussen live in Valley City, Ohio, eight months of each year; the other four they spend in Panama City Beach, where they're deeply involved in the Education Encore program.

"We've been going to Florida for nine years," Trudy says, "but it wasn't until the winter of 2011 that we heard about the Education Encore program. We found a flier for it in the newspaper — the Panama City News Herald."

The Rasmussens say they enjoyed every class they've taken with Education Encore, from a course about the Seminole Tribe of Florida to a gourmet cooking class. Jerry especially enjoys the history classes taught by Bill Heitzig, and Trudy likes the legal briefs class conducted by local criminal justice attorney Dustin Stephenson.

Visitors interested in filling one day per week of their Sunshine State stay with classes on a variety of topics may register for Education Encore at GulfCoast.edu/Encore. Who knows? Students may strike up friendships with people who, during the summer months, live in cities across the country — or across the world.

environment in which they are able to explore new topics while making their own unique contributions to the program. On staff and among those who come to the program as students are former college professors, retired doctors and lawyers, and other experts in their fields.

Mary McGraw has been an Encore instructor for more than 10 years. She currently teaches metalsmithing, but she has taught many other aspects of jewelry design, too. Before she began to teach, she was a participant.

"I am a huge supporter of the Encore program," she says. "My students are fabulous. They are very motivated, curious and enthusiastic about the subject matter, which makes my job fun. Of course, it can be challenging, too. I have many repeat students, so I need to keep the subject matter fresh for them while also providing the basics for the new students."

Kidwell explains that some of the students in Encore classes did not — some could not — attend college in their youth. "They come here because they want to experience the college setting," she says. "Others attended college years ago and have fond memories of those days. Education Encore is an opportunity to reminisce, with one huge difference, which is summed-up by our slogan, 'No Stress! No Tests! No Grades! Just FUN!'"

Encore courses lead to new opportunities and new friendships, says Conniff. She recalls a "Florida Shores" class in which the instructor encouraged students to

bring in shells they found on their beach walks — an invitation that led to the formation of a shell-collecting club.

"Education Encore provides a network of people to interact with," Conniff says. "Once you leave your career behind, you've lost a particular kind of network that was a part of your everyday life, and that can be hard. Education Encore gives people access to a social network while they're retired."

If the program already sounds too good to be true, brace for more good news: The cost of enrollment is minimal, at \$92 for the six-week program (four classes offered each Friday) at the Panama City campus and \$88 for the eight-week program (three classes each Wednesday) at the Gulf/Franklin campus. The fee is the same whether students choose to attend one class each day or four, and scholarships are available to those who qualify.

"Education Encore is one of the best education bargains in the Bay area," says Capra. "But to me, the most important aspect of the program is that it provides the citizens of Bay County — and our winter visitors — the opportunity to be lifelong learners."

The spring 2018 semester starts Jan. 19 in Panama City and Jan. 24 in Port St. Joe. Kidwell recommends that prospective students register early, as classes fill quickly. So, sharpen your pencils, lace up your dancing shoes, and pull out the birder's guide to Northwest Florida, because school is back in session. ●

To register for Education Encore, visit: GulfCoast.edu/Encore

FIELD TRIPS, LUNCH & LEARN AND MORE

ALONG WITH OFFERING COURSES and opportunities to gain new skills and new relationships, the Education Encore program hosts field trips to historical, cultural, environmental and entertainment sites in the area; access to the GCSC campus bookstore, library and fully equipped wellness center; and free or discounted admittance to Commodores athletic events and visual and performing arts productions at the Amelia G. Tapper Center for the Arts.

Another benefit is weekly "Lunch and Learn" programs. Students dine in the college's conference room and hear guest speakers lecture on an array of subjects relevant to their audience. Occasionally, the "learn" part of a Lunch and Learn takes the form of a performance of some kind.



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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

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

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

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 Wolfgramm, 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

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

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.



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



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Chasin' The Sun explores the diverse fisheries found in the emerald waters off the coast of Panama City Beach. Hosts and professional fishing guides Captain Justin Leake and Captain Travis Holeman provide an in-depth look at the irresistible coastal lifestyle, highlighting the region's rich culture and revealing why Panama City Beach is a fishing and diving hotspot and family vacation destination.

Catch full episodes from season 1 & 2 at
ChasinTheSunTV.com



EVENTS

Enjoy a weekend filled with parades, float tours, street fair, kids zone and live music (and lots and lots of beads). 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. New to this year's event will be collaboration with Southern Living Magazine. 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

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

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



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Season's Breezes

Venture out onto Panama City Beach in the winter and you'll encounter a variety of conditions. On rare occasion, they may even be wintry. Breezes tend to be northerly and cool in the morning, so it pays to be prepared with a light jacket. But, at midday, you may find yourself laying on a beach blanket on the sand and trading your morning coffee for something cool to drink. **PHOTOS BY SAIGE ROBERTS**

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1129 Beck Ave., (850) 257-5030



FINN'S BARISTA BAR & SNACK SHACK

A local hot spot favored by both visitors and residents, Finn's Barista Bar and Snack Shack offers a variety of yummy treats and deliciously brewed coffee and also Noli South kombucha tea, sold by the bottle and on tap. Noli South is handcrafted locally in Panama City Beach using organic ingredients to produce unique flavors of kombucha fermented tea. Want to keep your tea cold or your coffee hot? Grab a Finn's tumbler mug that makes it easy to sip on the go!
7220 Thomas Drive, (850) 249-3466



BROOKLYN'S

Going to picnic at the beach or biking through one of the state parks? Go green and stay hydrated during your day with a S'well stainless steel water bottle that will keep drinks cold for 24 hours or hot for 12. Each purchase of a S'well bottle helps provide clean drinking water around the world through UNICEF. And, no picnic should be without a cute beach blanket. Coming in a variety of unique designs, this "roundie" blanket is made of thick material perfect for wrapping around you and the kids on a cool night!

Pier Park (204 Bluefish Drive, Suite 110), (850) 233-9982



THE SHADOW BOX

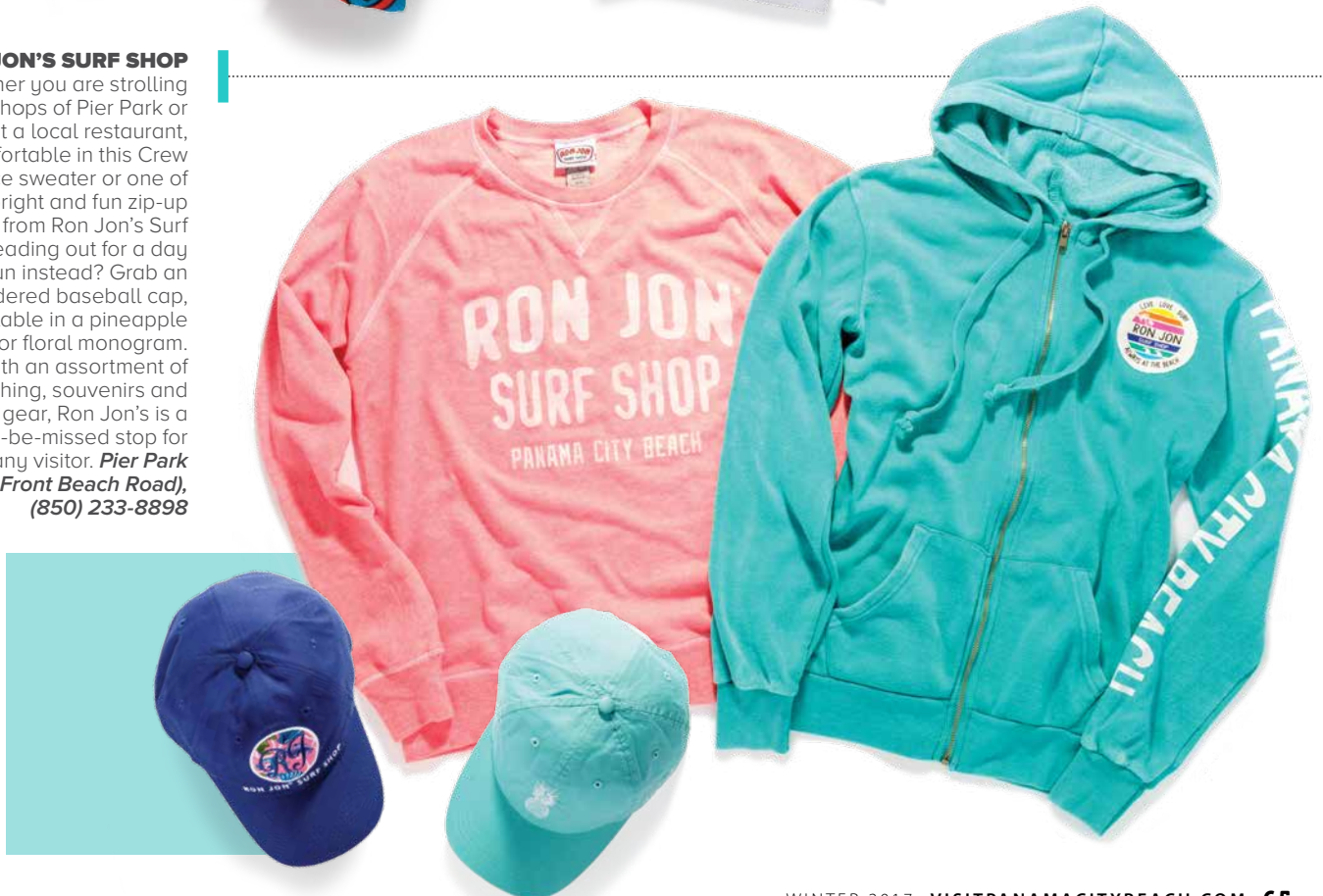
No beach house would be complete without a clever tea towel, matching pillow and chic magnet! The Shadow Box, a locally owned antiques paradise, is located on the east end of Panama City Beach. Their whimsical décor suited to eccentric lifestyles makes this a popular location for home goods and gifts. *1711 Thomas Drive, (850) 249-1388*



RON JON'S SURF SHOP

Whether you are strolling the shops of Pier Park or dining at a local restaurant, be comfortable in this Crew Fleece sweater or one of the bright and fun zip-up jackets from Ron Jon's Surf Shop! Heading out for a day in the sun instead? Grab an embroidered baseball cap, available in a pineapple design or floral monogram.

With an assortment of clothing, souvenirs and beach gear, Ron Jon's is a not-to-be-missed stop for any visitor. *Pier Park (16150 Front Beach Road), (850) 233-8898*



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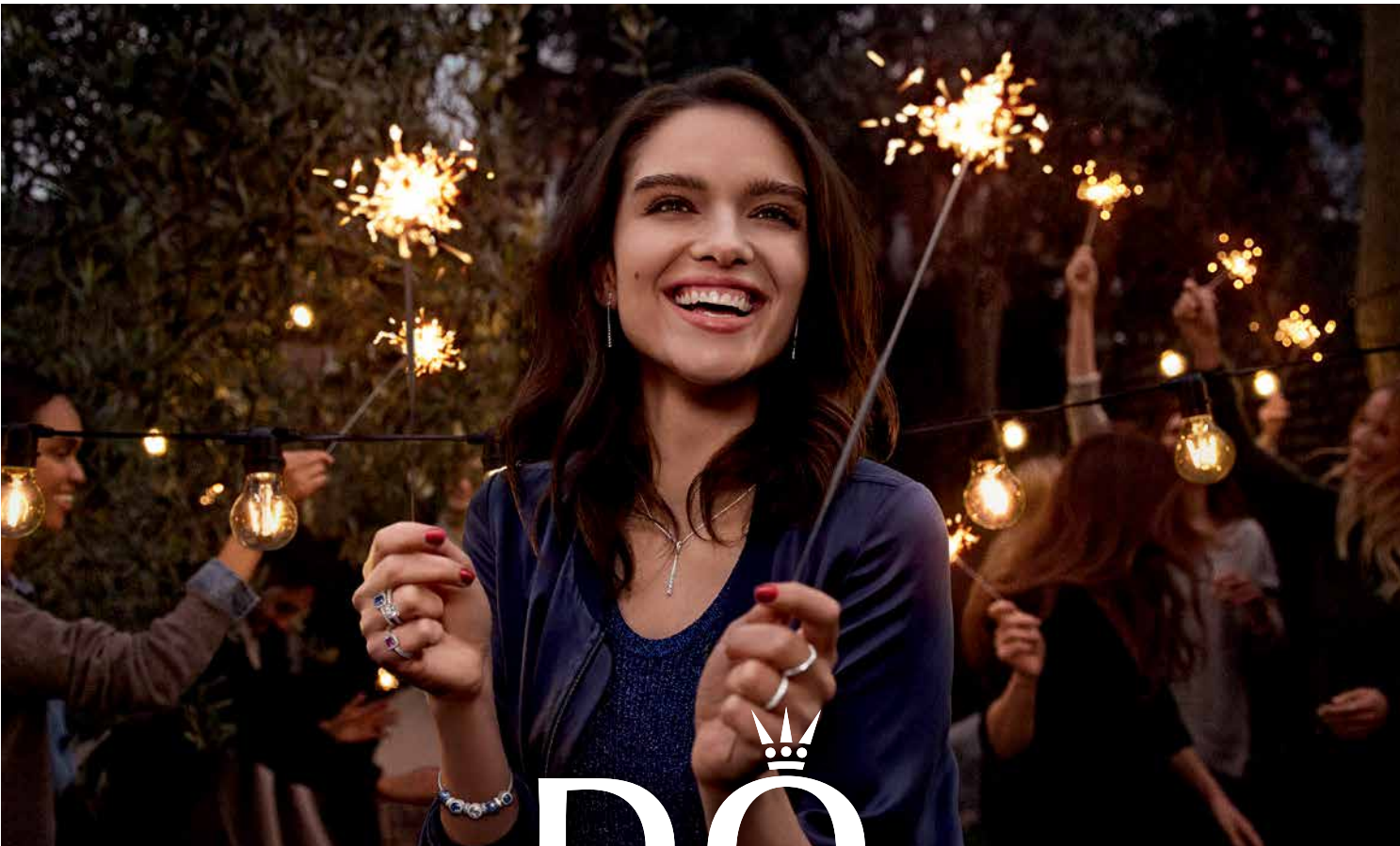
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Prime-time dishes served before the sun goes down

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

THERE'S AN OFT-REPEATED saying that the early bird gets the worm, but what some of Panama City Beach's most popular restaurants are giving the early birds who take a seat at their tables is far more palatable than the proverbial wriggling invertebrate. Offering a wide array of beautiful dishes full of prime-time flavor at lower price points, these off-peak menus are clear confirmation that getting in early really does taste good.

BOAR'S HEAD RESTAURANT & TAVERN

For nearly 40 years, owners Barry and Robin Ross have been welcoming guests at Boar's Head Restaurant & Tavern to dine on upscale pub fare in their rustically romantic Anglophile-inspired den of deliciousness. Serving sophisticated dishes like marinated duck breast and luscious lobster paired with juicy steak, they give their early birds a slightly lighter portion of popular plates including perfectly plump Shrimp Scampi, fall-off-the-bone, tender half-slab Baby-Back Pork Ribs, and decadent Pesto Shrimp & Artichoke with Cheese Tortellini, adding

in a few offerings exclusive to their early dining menu. Served daily from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m., the Early Bird Specials are the perfect way to satiate a slightly smaller appetite with full-sized flavors that satisfy at any hour of the day. *Boar's Head Restaurant & Tavern is located at 17290 Front Beach Road, Panama City Beach. For more information, call (850) 234-6628 or visit BoarsHeadRestaurant.com.*

FIREFLY

A sprinkle of fireflies might come out after dark, but from the pre-dusk hours of 5 p.m. until 6, it's the early birds who flock to the dining rooms

The kitchen at the Boar's Head serves gourmet lobster and duck dishes and also elevates fried chicken tenders, seen here, to an art form.



BOAR'S HEAD RESTAURANT & TAVERN

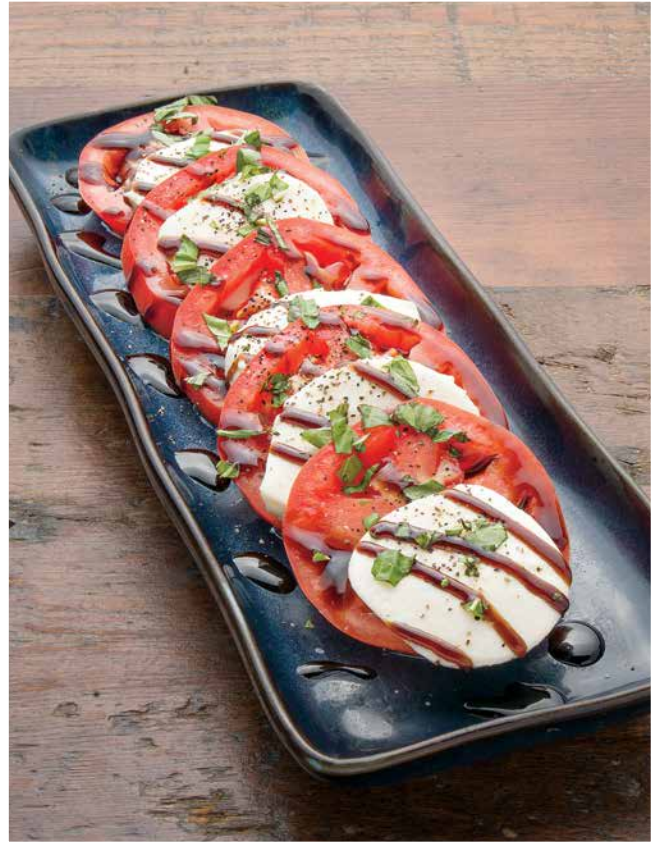
“Sunset Specials” at the Firefly restaurant include beef tenderloin medallions bathed in a white sauce and served with mashed potatoes and asparagus spears.



at Firefly restaurant in Panama City Beach. Since opening in 2007, owners Dave and Stacy Trepanier have been tempting guests to their romantic venue with an innovative menu of fine dining fare and beautifully crafted sushi that enchants the eye and titillates the tongue, and their Sunset Specials are yet another illumination of their culinary skill. Offering a menu of slightly smaller plates whose excellence is fully lit, the Sunset Specials offer seasonally inspired guest favorites like juicy beef tenderloin medallions, succulent short ribs, and meaty salmon and crab cakes. With their standard of brilliance and attention to exquisite detail shining through in every dish, Firefly is one restaurant that will definitely light up your evening. *Firefly is located at 535 N. Richard Jackson Blvd., Panama City Beach. For more information, call (850) 249-3359 or visit FireflyPCB.com.*

RUNAWAY ISLAND

Running from 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., the Early Bird Specials at Runaway Island make the early hour something to savor, offering fresh fare that's seasonally driven and often a way to get some



RUNAWAY ISLAND



RUNAWAY ISLAND

An early evening at the Gulf-front Runaway Island might begin with fresh tomatoes coupled with mozzarella and move on to a pasta dish.

preview reviews on dishes being newly introduced. Since opening in 2014, owner Neel Bennett and managing partner Rob Hammer have been offering guests a casual place to dine on some of the area's best coastally inspired cuisine, with Gulf views and great on-deck seating that keep things relaxed and breezy. Serving up price points that fall a bit below what one might expect from entrées like tender wood-fired New York strip steaks and golden-fried Chicken Parmesan, the early bird menu at Runaway will make a clock-watcher out of you, proving that being early can be deliciously rewarding. *Runaway Island is located at 14521 Front Beach Road, Panama City Beach. For more information, call (850) 634-4884 or visit RunawayIslandPCB.com.*

SALTWATER GRILL

Coming in ahead of the tide of hungry dinner hour, diners certainly have their perks, and at Saltwater Grill, one of those

perks is avoiding the often-lengthy wait for a table. Luring guests in from 4 p.m. until 5:30 p.m., the Early Bird menu offers pre-sunset prices for dishes that don't go light on flavor, featuring specially created plates that showcase the talents that have made this restaurant a local favorite for more than 15 years. Having come under the ownership of father-daughter duo Rick and Christy Spell in 2016, Saltwater is no less dedicated to providing an excellent experience for every guest they serve — and the early birds get a taste of that excellence before anyone else. *11040 Hutchison Blvd., Panama City Beach. For more information, call (850) 230-2739 or visit SaltwaterGrillPCB.com.*

TRIPLE J STEAKHOUSE

With a menu full of steakhouse classics worthy of any New York social scene, Triple J Steakhouse has been serving guests tender steaks paired with all

manner of accouterments and proving with every dish that this beachside institution of perfectly cooked grinds, strips, ribs and roasts definitely has some chops in their besting of the beef. But rather than focusing solely on the steak, owner Peter Sostheim wanted his restaurant to pay equal respect to the elegant cuisine local to this area, including locally caught seafood, which guests have been enjoying for the better part of two decades.

Plating up for the early crowd, their Early Bird Specials offer a guest-driven menu of popular dishes like the 6-ounce, center-cut sirloin as well as other beef, chicken and seafood entrees that pair perfectly with Happy Hour drinks mixed fresh from the bar. From first bite to last, Triple J's three hours of early eats are prime time for prime dining. *Triple J Steakhouse is located at 2218 Thomas Drive, Panama City Beach. For more information, call (850) 233-9514 or visit TripleJSteakhouse.com.* ●

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Pickleball Gains a Following

Sport combines elements of tennis and badminton

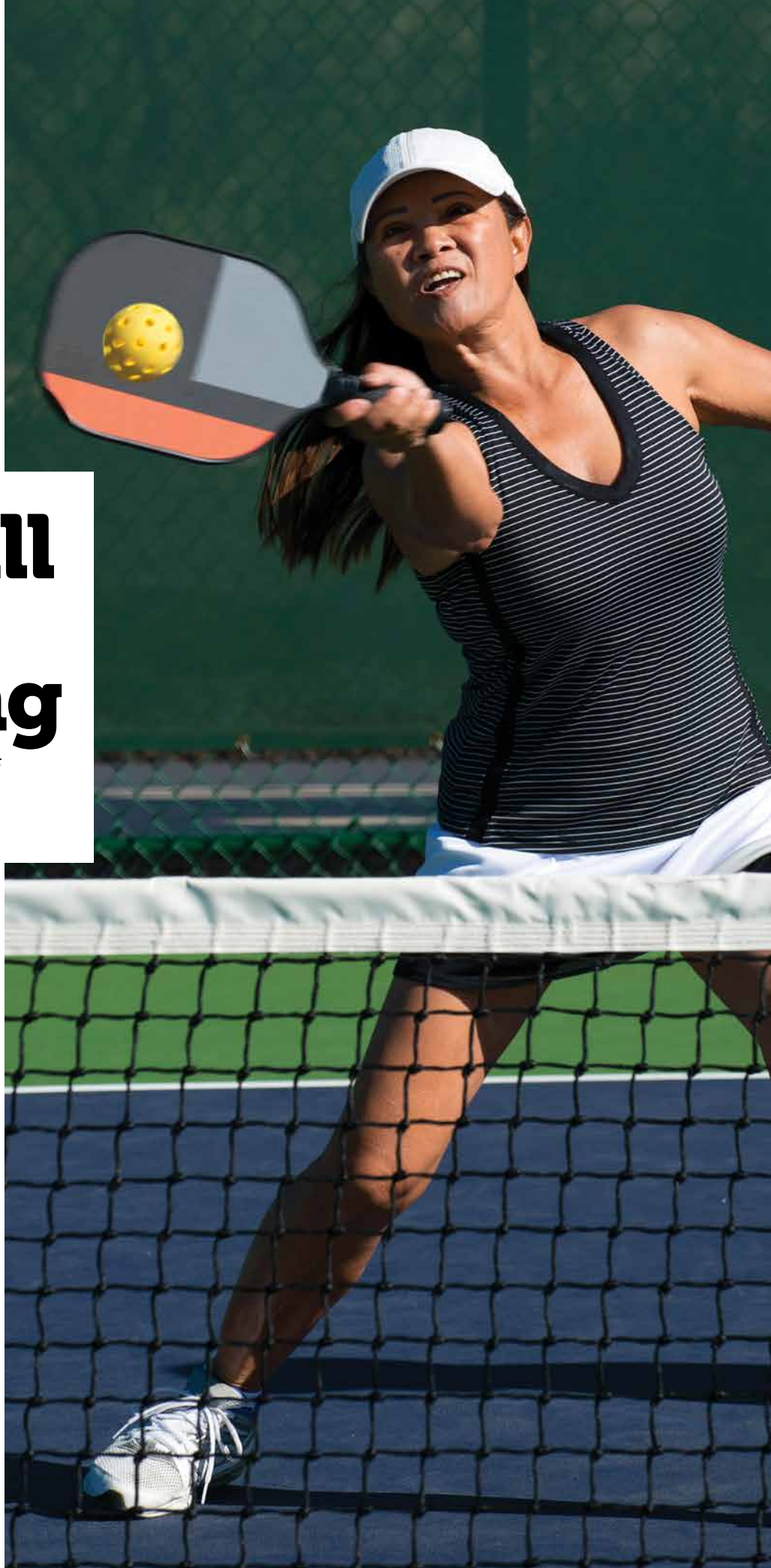
BY THOMAS J. MONIGAN

THE PADDLES ARE SMALLER than tennis racquets but larger than Ping-Pong paddles, the ball is made from heavy-duty plastic and resembles a whiffle ball, the court is the same size as a doubles badminton court and the net is just a hair lower than a tennis net.

Intrigued? Then perhaps it's time you took up pickleball.

This unique sport was invented in 1965 when, according to the USA Pickleball Association's (USAPA) website, a group of dads came up with the game for their kids, who were bored with their usual summertime activities. Legend has it that one of the dads had a dog named Pickles who would chase after the ball when the kids were playing, which led the dad to dub the game, "pickleball."

Pickleball has come a long way since those days of simple rules and handmade equipment. For one thing, pickleball courts can now be found worldwide. For another, the sport's fan base has





PANAMA CITY BEACH RECREATION DEPARTMENT

LIKE TENNIS, SORT OF

With its abbreviated court and a ball that is less lively than a tennis ball, pickleball combines elements of paddleball, badminton and tennis.

moved from kids to adults, ages 55 to 75 — the very age range of the majority of the visitors who flock to Panama City Beach every winter. In fact, it's thanks to these "snowbirds" that the popularity of pickleball has grown in Panama City Beach to the point where the sport has become a revenue source for the city.

Richard Sanders, vice president of sports marketing and special events for Panama City Beach, explained how pickleball went from something year-round residents of Panama City Beach had never heard of to something that is offered in numerous locations across the city.

"We already knew that golf was popular with our winter residents," said Sanders, "but we wanted to find out if there was something that we didn't offer that our winter residents would like to do. We put out survey cards at our golf courses, and pickleball kept popping up. But I had no idea what pickleball was."

Sanders finally got an introduction to the sport at a sports conference in Daytona Beach, where he observed several seniors playing a game that looked like badminton with paddles.

"I asked, 'By any chance, is this pickleball?' They said that it was, and right after that, I bought three nets and took them over to Parks and Rec and said, 'You're going to start pickleball.'"

The first year that Parks and Rec offered pickleball, the demand for court time was overwhelming, so the next year, the city charged \$3 to each person who wanted to play.

"That's how it became a revenue source," said Sanders.

Jim Ponek, director of parks and recreation for Panama City Beach, called pickleball the fastest growing sport that he knows of for adults over the age of 50. "It's really the new, upcoming sport," he said.

Sanders explained that the city then built two more outdoor courts at the senior center. "But in a year's time, we outgrew those," he said. "So I went to Edgewater Beach and asked if they would be willing to convert one of their tennis courts to a pickleball court. This winter, we'll have 12 or more courts open."

Two of these courts are outdoor courts that can be found at Lyndell Conference Center, where there is no charge to play. At



PANAMA CITY BEACH RECREATION DEPARTMENT



“There are about 100 local players in the area, and about 25 or 30 belong to the USAPA. What happens is, as soon as the snowbirds come in, the 100 grows to 1,000. It just goes through the roof.”

— Carl Gendece, USAPA Ambassador for Panama City Beach

Frank Brown Park, there are three indoor courts in the gymnasium that are available for a small fee on Wednesday and Friday mornings, November through April.

For those who are eager to learn but don't know where to begin, Ponek recommends the well-attended lessons that are available at Frank Brown Park on Mondays, January through March.

Karen Parrish, the USAPA's director in the region that includes Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Florida — and, therefore, Panama City Beach — said, “It's for all skill levels. It's great exercise and a lot of fun. It's just fantastic.”

Parrish also stressed that for those just starting out, the cost is not that high. “You can get a beginner paddle for about \$50, and that's all you really need,” she said. “All the facilities have their own nets and their own balls.”

In addition to playing, Carl Gendece, the USAPA Ambassador for Panama City Beach, gives free lessons at the Fusion Fitness Center in Lynn Haven.

Gendece and his wife had retired and moved to Panama City Beach from St. Louis when they began to look for an activity where they could meet other people.

“Something to do together,” said Deborah Gendece.

Pickleball was the answer.

“Exercise is the best part, and it's not difficult if you don't worry about how good you play,” Deborah said with a laugh. “And it is very social. We get together after we play and have barbecues and things like that.”

“It's been tremendous,” Carl said. “And I've been working with Jim Ponek for the past three years. We've been trying very hard to move pickleball along in the parks and recreation program.

“There are about 100 local players in the area, and about 25 or 30 belong to the USAPA,” he said. “What happens is, as soon as the snowbirds come in, the 100 grows to 1,000. It just goes through the roof.”

“It's evolving,” Deborah said. “Now we're seeking levels. It's a game where if you're experienced and you're playing newbies, the score would be 11-3. So you probably want to play with people at your own level.”

More young people have apparently discovered this sport, which typically has been played mostly by people of ages 55 to 75.

“It's starting to trickle down into the schools, and we're starting to see younger players,” Carl said. “We had a guy who is 23 and had just relocated here from Washington, D.C. He played with us Monday.”

And how did that work out?

“He's a tournament-level player. He got out there and played with tournament-level players like myself, and he found it to be very competitive,” Gendece said. “I think the younger people will catch on, and when that happens, it's really going to become tremendously popular.”

There's no doubt that when that day arrives, Panama City Beach will have court space aplenty to offer. ●

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A COLLAGE OF OBJECTS
Terrah Waynick unites the contemporary and the timeless, the familiar and the eclectic, in displays at her shop, The Shadow Box.



THE SHADOW BOX

Business's unique inventory unites old and new

BY HANNAH BURKE

FOUR YEARS AGO, Terrah Waynick recalls admiring a shadow box that she had purchased in her home state of Kentucky. Much like the business she was developing, the antique was a vessel for displaying the marriage of eclectic objects in one well-defined space.

It's precisely this that distinguishes The Shadow Box from other antique stores. Most "antiquing" likely consists of aimless digging through clustered rows of dusty, vintage memorabilia. While certain objects may strike your fancy, it's often difficult envisioning them in your own home. However, The Shadow Box's maze of staged items puts the picture together for you, delivering an experience more akin to a trip to an eccentric art gallery. After all, Waynick is, at her very core, an artist.

After graduating college, the Louisville native began work in the hospitality industry. Gaining promotion after promotion, she suddenly found herself in the deep end of the corporate world, crunching numbers and stuck at a desk. While Waynick was grateful for all that she was



“I would have loved to have done window displays at Macy’s or something. There’s a challenge in working with tons of pieces of art, especially when we have just as many old items as we do new ones. When you add contemporary pieces, it becomes something fresh and new that people really enjoy.” — Waynick laughs

learning, her artistic expression was stifled, and she realized she wasn’t where she was meant to be. Now business savvy, she was ready to start with a blank canvas and create her own masterpiece.

“My husband David and I had been vacationing in Panama City Beach for maybe eight years,” Waynick says. “I remember lying on the beach with him and saying, ‘How great would it be to wake up and see this every day?’ We wanted a change and decided to take that leap of faith by moving here five years ago. Now, when I look out my window, I remember this was just something I used to dream about.”

Originally, Waynick created The Shadow Box with a close friend, who has since moved to Indiana. Their original vision

for the store was to feature items from artisans with all kinds of talents. Now with full ownership of the business, Waynick carefully picks each collection for the store.

“Mostly, people come and show me the items, or send me pictures of their goods through one of my social media channels,” Waynick explains. “I’m very particular. First and foremost, I want to make sure all the personalities are going to jibe and create a special feeling when you come into the shop. On the weekends, when we’re hustlin’ and bustlin’, vendors come in to spruce up their spaces. It’s always exciting to see them because they bring in such positive energy. They’re also really good at what they do.”

That’s not to say that Waynick doesn’t do a little treasure hunting of her own. When visiting new places, she loves to sift through items at markets and estate sales, handing out her card to whomever catches her keen eye. The Shadow Box currently has about 20 vendors from every corner of the country, with room to grow. Diversity is the beauty of The Shadow Box. There’s a little something

to suit every taste, rarely leaving visitors empty-handed.

Living by the beach, The Shadow Box constantly features coastal items. Shabby-chic décor will always have a special place in Waynick’s heart, but lately she’s having quite the affair with industrial-themed goods. As you wind through a pebbled path — actual stones make up this whimsical shop’s floor — you’ll find designs with rustic tones and farmhouse flare. One of the more intimate spaces, known as “The Lace Room,” features handcrafted lace ensembles, dolls and other alluring adornments. After that, your nose will lead you straight to a little section of homemade bath salts, scrubs, soaps and fragrances.

Though the items are bewitching, the real magic of The Shadow Box arises from Waynick’s creative exhibits.

“My absolute favorite thing to do is stage a vignette. I would have loved to have done window displays at Macy’s or something,” Waynick laughs. “Sometimes I’ll come in at 5 a.m. and have the parking lot full of new inventory that I have to piece together. There’s a challenge in working with tons of pieces of art, especially when we have just as many old items as we do new ones. If you just pile a bunch of old stuff together, it comes across as stale. When you add contemporary pieces, it becomes something fresh and new that people really enjoy.”

The burgeoning popularity of The Shadow Box has also been a catalyst for Waynick’s interior design abilities. Enchanted by the shop’s layout, it’s not uncommon for customers to enlist Waynick’s

gift for making a house into a home — through the arrangement of items found at The Shadow Box or elsewhere.

Waynick actively participates in the Grand Lagoon Coalition, a nonprofit group of eastern Panama City Beach business owners who strive to promote the Grand Lagoon area. As of 2017, the coalition consists of approximately 70 members.

“I’m really grateful to be a part of the coalition because I genuinely believe everyone there wants to see small businesses and their owners thrive, especially those who are on Thomas Drive,” Waynick says. “There needs to be some attention brought to this area because we have so much to offer as the grassroots, local business and artist community. We want people to know we’re here.”

Through her involvement with the marketing committee of the coalition, Waynick believes their campaigns and advertising efforts are paving the way for more tourism to the area.

“I glow with pride and happiness when a tourist tells me they make it a point to come here every visit, or when I see the same local girls pop in on their lunch break,” Waynick says. “I want to see people walking out the door with something that’s special to them, something they can take home and keep forever. Being a part of that is amazing.” ●



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SPINNAKER'S Square Grouper Sandwich, is a great way to begin or end your day at one of Panama City Beach's premier beach clubs.

MICHAEL BOONI

FROM GULF TO BUN

The grouper sandwich is a Gulf Coast classic **BY LIESEL SCHMIDT**

WHEN YOU LIVE on the coast, there's an endless array of beautiful seafood at your fingertips, and best-loved examples of the gilled glories of the Gulf include the grouper that swim offshore. One bite of these flaky, tender fish and you'll be hooked, and the restaurants on Panama City Beach showcase grouper in every way imaginable — grilling, frying and blackening these beauties to be at their best. And while they certainly warrant luxury when it comes to plating and pairings, these fine, fine fish are a major lure when they're caught between two buns.

Barefoot Hide A Way Grill

Because it is part of a resort property, one might expect the Barefoot Hide A Way Grill to be a bit stuffy, but there's a casual, relaxed feel at this Gulf-side grill and bar that makes it welcoming to visitors and

locals alike. There's nothing fancied on the menu — it's all straight-up flavor in everything from their juicy burgers to their crispy fish and chips. Riding high on the tide of guest fave raves is their Grouper Po'Boy, and whether you want it fried,

grilled or blackened, Barefoot's grouper is a glorious taste of the Gulf that'll make your hunger come out of hiding. *15405 Front Beach Road, (850) 249-2031, BarefootHideAWayGrill.com*

Dusty's Oyster Bar

Named for its original owner and founder, Dusty's Oyster Bar has been a Panama City Beach landmark for more than three decades, known for a casual laid-back atmosphere where music is practically part of the menu. And aside from the fresh oysters, one of the things that

keeps people biting is Dusty's grouper sandwich. Since having taken the helm more than 25 years ago, owners John and Callie Hicks have made it their goal to offer a fantastic sandwich at a fantastic price. They do just that by using fresh-caught fillets reeled in by local fishermen and serving them fried, grilled or blackened in a po'boy roll to make sure you don't leave hungry. They may be known for their shucking skills, but this place might also make you a grouper groupie. *16450 Front Beach Road, (850) 233-0035*

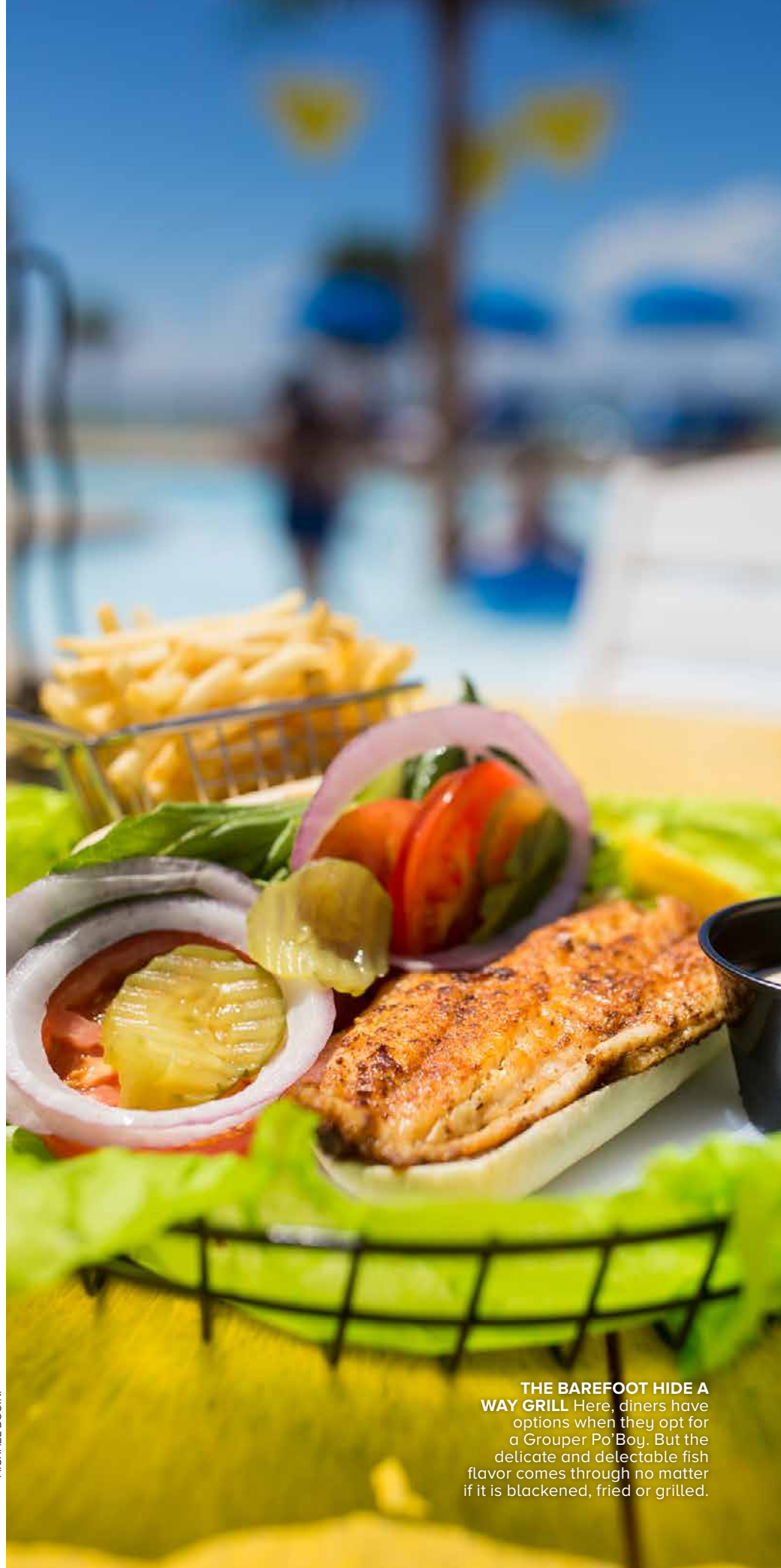
J. Michael's

Offering a menu teeming with tasty Creole/Southern-style cuisine including seafood gumbo, plump shrimp sautéed in garlic butter, and spicy red beans and rice that could well be considered its original claim to fame, J. Michael's has been a beloved part of the Panama City Beach cuisine scene since 1976. Owner J. Michael Stewart delights in serving up fresh seafood, "Surfer" sandwiches and a whole tackle box full of other tasty dishes that keep reeling diners in. Riding the rip curl when it comes to their handcrafted "Surfers" is the Fisherman's Favorite, a grilled fillet of grouper served on a toasted onion roll with a slather of housemade tartar sauce that adds just the right amount of creaminess, crunch and acidity to make this one handheld that's truly worth getting hooked on. *3210 Thomas Drive, (850) 233-2055, JMichaelsTheOriginal.com*

Schooners

Offering a wide variety of items from cheese curds to jerked chicken, Schooners lets the wind take them where it may when it comes to the style of their cuisine. But whatever dish is on course for your own ride on the tides, one thing clearly keeping this open-air beach shack a popular place to dine is their dedication to using fresh ingredients that don't need a whole lot of dressing up. Among their biggest catches is the Gulf Fresh Grouper Sandwich, a locally caught fillet perfectly fried, grilled

MICHAEL BOONIN



THE BAREFOOT HIDE A WAY GRILL Here, diners have options when they opt for a Grouper Po'Boy. But the delicate and delectable fish flavor comes through no matter if it is blackened, fried or grilled.

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HOLLY GARDNER

or blackened to be tender and juicy and served on a fresh bun with crisp lettuce and tomato. And while some restaurants might give all the glory to the hands at work in their kitchen, the owners at Schooners give major cred to the fishermen who harvest these fine specimens of the sea. *5121 Gulf Drive, (850) 235-3555, Schooners.com*

Sisters of the Sea & Dive Bar

Serving up Southern comfort classics, juicy burgers and Gulf seafood while placing a premium on freshness, Sisters of the Sea offers guests a dining experience that's truly unique — both in their cuisine as well as in everything to see and do in the full entertainment area at their new location just off Grand Lagoon. Since opening in 2015, owner Kay Parker Shafer and managing partner Willie Robert have been bringing their hometown flavor out to play, and it's obvious they delight in making their menu deliciously lively. Baiting the line with great sandwiches and entrées served with fresh-made sides like fried okra, coleslaw and house-made potato salad, they give it their all in keeping diners hooked with top sellers like the Giggling Grouper Sandwich. And while its name might be a little silly, the balance of sweetness and acidity from pickled red onion paired with Florida citrus marmalade piled high atop a moist filet of grilled grouper goodness nestled into a toasted brioche bun proves that this is one fun joint that takes their food seriously. *3901 Thomas Drive, (850) 708-1890, SistersOfTheSea.net*



MICHAEL BOONIN

J. MICHAELS has been serving up seafood, fried Southern and seasoned Creole, since 1976. Anglers and others find its Fisherman's Favorite grouper sandwich irresistible, at left. The Giggling Grouper Sandwich at **SISTERS OF THE SEA AND DIVE BAR** is spiked with pickled red onion and citrus marmalade.

Spinnaker's Beach Club and Paradise Grill

The epicurean epiphany of owner Sparky Sparkman, Spinnaker's Beach Club and Paradise Grill opened in 1972 with the sole focus of giving guests three things that became their motto: "Food for the body, drink for the spirit, music for the soul!" Offering a menu packed with Southern comfort classics bearing an imaginative "spin" that elevates them to the next level, Spinnaker's is definitely accomplishing their goal, and one dish that keeps everyone spinning on the line is the Square Grouper Sandwich. Served grilled, blackened, five-spiced or fried up to crispy golden perfection in a Southern-style breading, this fresh-caught fillet is tender and moist, nestled on a butter-grilled ciabatta bun loaded with lettuce, tomato and fried onion tanglers for some added crunch. One bite of this sandwich proves that sometimes it really is hip to be square. *8795 Thomas Drive, (850) 234-7892, SpinnakerBeachClub.com* ●

Make it your Real Fun Beach

Beach offers more activities than you could hope to exhaust in a short vacation **BY HANNAH BURKE**



THE RECIPE FOR A perfect vacation is all about incorporating key ingredients that suit your tastes. The adventure-seeker may require lots of thrills, while mellower types may gravitate toward spa days and eco activities. Luckily, countless attractions make Panama City Beach everybody's one-stop-shop for a gratifying getaway.

ADVENTURE

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Panhandlehelicopter.com

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WATER'S EDGE

A family looks toward Gator Lake and St. Andrews State Park, where Florida's state reptile is often scene; a walk along the docks at the a marina inspires a warm embrace.





UPS AND DOWNS

Race City Amusement Park, a kind of year-round county fair, is home to the Hurricane, the speediest roller coaster on the coast; the Skycoaster bungee drop is 137 feet high.

go-karts race up to 30 laps around a curvy, exhilarating track. Slingshotpcb.com

The newest thrill in Panama City Beach takes place in a single room, where your group is locked in and can only “escape” through the power of teamwork. When the 60-minute countdown begins, adrenaline pumps while your mind races to unravel clues, solve puzzles and come one step closer to revealing the secret of your room. **Escape Zone 60** of Panama City Beach offers two themed adventures to choose from, both capable of bringing together families, friends and future friends in a captivating group exercise. Escapezone60.com/locations/panama-city-beach-escape-rooms/

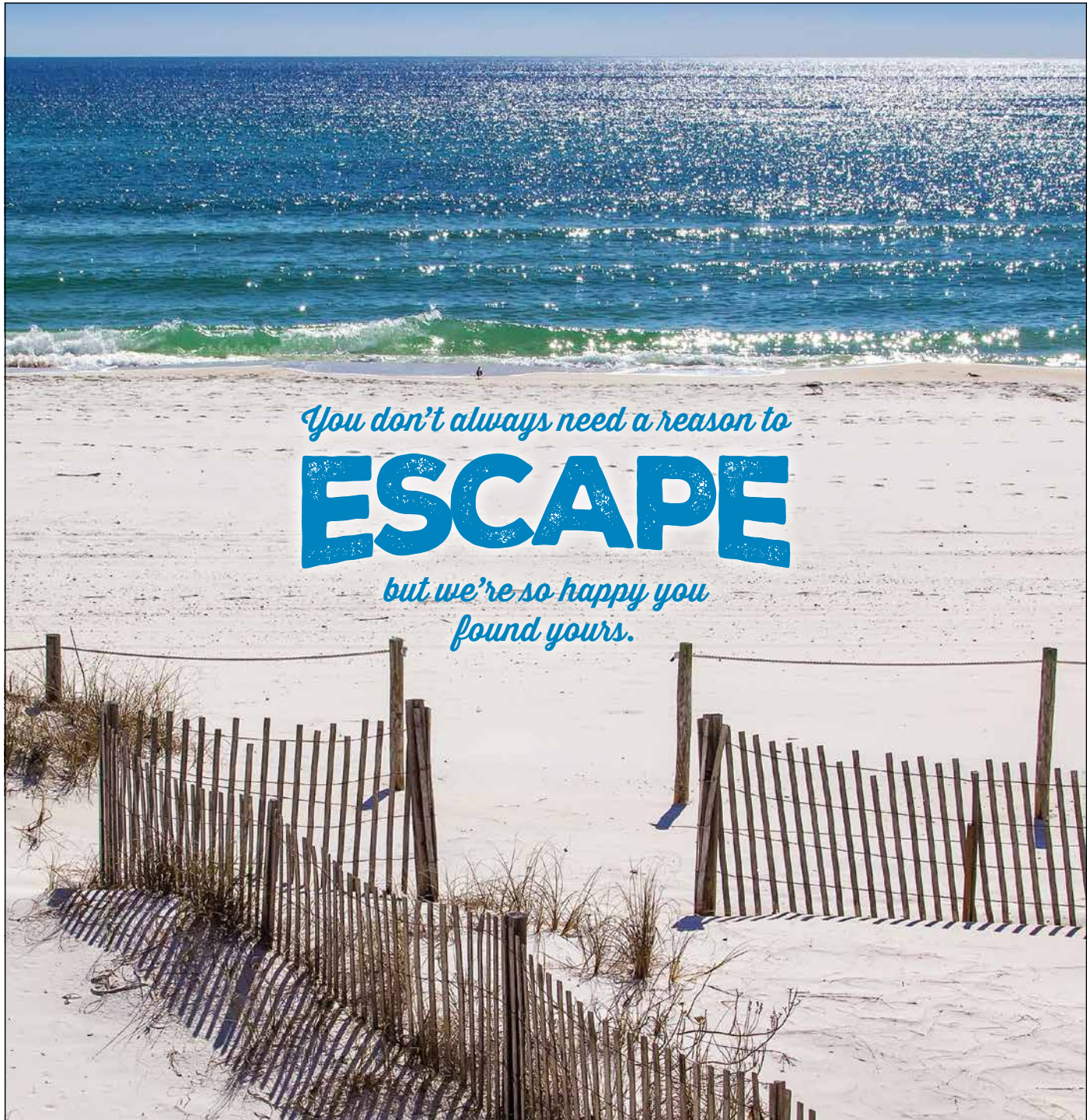
FAMILY FUN

Emerald Coast Mirror Maze and Lazer Tag glows with fun, offering a multitude of family attractions all under one roof. After challenging your navigational skills at a 2,300-square-foot labyrinth of mirrors, it might be time for some good ol’ fashioned laser tag. Make it kids vs. parents in the center’s massive arena, or channel your inner secret agent by evading a tricky series of beams in the Laser Challenge. Emeraldcoastmirrormaze.com/index.html

Race City is like a year-round county fair. Though home to beloved classics like the mighty Ferris wheel and Scrambler, you’ll also find the Hurricane, the speediest coaster on the beach! That is, unless you consider the park’s Skycoaster, a 137-foot high bungee drop that propels riders through the wind! Children over 42 inches tall can enjoy this breathtaking experience, and all sizes are welcome at the arcade, mini-golf course and sea maze. Racecitypcb.com

Traveling along Front Beach Road, you’re likely to be intrigued by the massive, upside down museum known as **Wonderworks**. The interior houses oddities, rides, discovery centers and zany exhibits to keep the family occupied all day. Children will love learning about the wonders of space and the natural environment at the hands-on “WonderZones.” Challenge them to a race through the rope course or a match in the Space Fury 360°, a ride that lets you shoot targets with lasers from a glow-in-the-dark bumper car! Wonderworksonline.com/panama-city-beach/

MICHAEL BOONIN



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ROMANCE

If you're looking for a restful but romantic retreat with your partner, **Indigo Earth Spa** is the perfect place for a little R&R. A departure from the conventional spa, Indigo Earth offers guests a variety of healing rituals and therapy to invigorate the soul. Indian Ayurveda services allow for meditation with targeted muscle treatments and the soothing scents of essential oils. Choose the special "You & Me" package or the "Pure Couple's Experience" for rejuvenating massages, hydrating skin scrubs, and exceptional full-body treatments at your loved one's side. Indigoearthspa.com/home/4569168694

With less humidity and heat to worry about, winter is the perfect season for active couples to pedal through Panama City Beach. **Barley's Bike Rental** provides beach cruisers for coastal travel, hybrids for the city, and mountain bikes for natural trails. Barley's shop is just one mile away from Gayle's Trails and the Conservation Park, offering miles of preserved wilderness that you can cruise through with your special someone. Plenty of photo ops and exhilarating paths that promise a workout will make this the perfect day for any pair. With a cool, sea breeze and the gentle crash of waves, there's nothing more peaceful than yoga on the beach with your partner. Take a class led by a professional instructor from **Studio by the Beach** for only \$10 a session. Start your day by stretching out at sunrise, or select the sunset class to bring on a good night's sleep. Pcbstudiobythesea.com/yoga/

NATURE

When you think of boat tours in Panama City Beach, you may picture charter fishing vessels, large yachts, pirate ships and the open Gulf. **Wild Thang Airboat Tours** propel passengers along the bays and marshes of the area, back into gator country. You're likely to see these reptiles sunbathing during the day tour, but the "Ultimate" ride tour after the sun goes down puts you on the water with them during their most active hours. See if you can spot those ruby red eyes as your captain



WILD AND MILD Adventurers keep an eye out for wildlife while experiencing an airboat ride out of West Bay; others may prefer more relaxed activities such as a waterfront bicycle or a dip in a pool.

illuminates the dark water with a flashlight, but don't forget to look up for a supreme view of the night sky! Wildairboat.com

While some travelers prefer the luxe amenities of resorts, others take to roughing it in a tent beneath the stars. Encompassing 1/2 miles of unblemished beach and woodland, the eco tourist need look no further than **St. Andrews State Park** to experience Panama City Beach untouched by human development. Hike through the winding pines along the Heron Pond and Gator Lake trails while observing the rich flora and fauna native to the area. Bike along paved pathways, or sit back and relax as you enjoy a boat tour of **Shell Island**. Anglers frequent rocky jetties and two fishing piers, rarely returning empty-handed! Top it all off with an exclusive campsite and some s'mores around the fire, and you'll never want to leave. Floridastateparks.org/park/St-Andrews

Though the Gulf in winter may be too chilly for swimming, there are still plenty of ways to experience its majesty. **Bay Point Water Sports** offers a variety of vessels, allowing for hours of exploration on the water. Partake in a guided dolphin tour or serve as your own captain, steering a pontoon boat through the emerald-green waves. If you're not afraid of a little splash, suit up, rent a kayak and tour at your own pace. Baypointwatersports.com ●

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FLORIDA'S BEACH WARNING FLAG

program uses flags in four colors accompanied by interpretive signs along the beach to explain the meaning of each color. Flags are located approximately one mile apart along the beach. Absence of flags does not assure safe waters. Current beach flag conditions can be found on VisitPanamaCityBeach.com.



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
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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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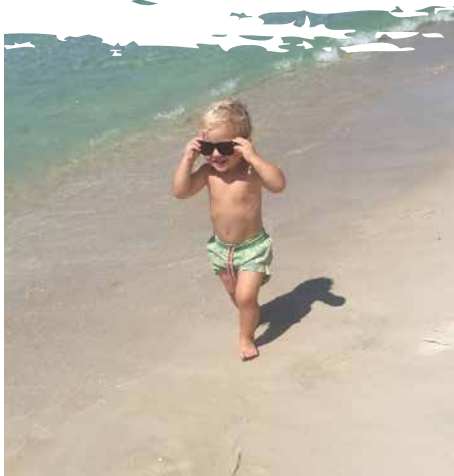
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