

DESTIN

SPRING & SUMMER GUIDE 2009



The best places to eat, sleep and play
in Destin this spring and summer

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Think before you print. And if you do print, print double-sided.

INTRODUCTION

TripAdvisor, the most trusted source for where to eat, sleep and play in thousands of destinations around the world, has collected the best insider tips from its 31 million monthly visitors to produce a unique series of travel guides. In addition to the best hotels, restaurants and attractions for every type of traveler, you'll get great advice about what to pack, how to get around and where to find the best views. Be sure to check out the guides at www.tripadvisor.com.



You'll find reviews for more than 270,000 hotels, 78,000 attractions and 469,000 restaurants on TripAdvisor.com. Learn from other travelers what to expect before you make your plans.



PACKING TIPS

1. "Don't forget to get your **fishing license**."—TripAdvisor Member
2. If staying in a condo, pack "**laundry detergent** to wash towels, because they stack up so quickly."—TripAdvisor Member, Forest, Miss.
3. "Bring **baggies** to keep clean, freshwater washcloths to wipe little faces. No sand will get in them."—TripAdvisor Member

Inside DESTIN

In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy, Toto and friends follow the yellow brick road to the enchanting Emerald City. Taking your adventurous cue from Ms. Gale, find a bit of paradise in Destin, a Florida coastal town that's also known as the Emerald Coast.

With its clear water (casting an emerald green hue, of course), water enthusiasts will enjoy everything from spying on dolphins (a popular pastime) to wind surfing. With its youthful attitude, families will enjoy building sand castles, speeding down water rides and teeing off in (totally amateur) miniature golf competitions. With its fishing excursions, golf courses, tasty restaurants and fine hotel options, those who like the good life will be more than satisfied.

Perhaps Dorothy had it wrong. It seems there's no place like Destin.

Top VIEWS



DESTIN'S BEST VIEWS



"Suggest you arrive at the **Marina Café** a half hour before sunset and watch twilight and darkness fall over the marina."—TripAdvisor Member

Marina Café, 404 Harbor Blvd., 850 837 7960

"We did a 'Sunset Cruise' on the **Sea Blaster**. We watched for dolphins and saw several, and then went into the bay to watch the sunset."—TripAdvisor Member

Original Sea Blaster, Behind the Lucky Snapper Restaurant, 76 Hwy. 98 E., 850 654 6888

"Rent a pontoon boat, and go out to **Crab Island**, which is near the Destin/Fort Walton Bridge. It is a blast. You can anchor, and the water is crystal clear most of the time. When you are finished snorkeling, drive into the bay and view the dolphins."—TripAdvisor Member

Crab Island

Where to PLAY

TOP 10 Attractions

1. Henderson Beach State Park, 17000 Emerald Coast Pkwy., 850 837 7550
2. Village of Baytowne Wharf, 800 622 1038
3. Just Chute Me Parasail, 404 Harbor Blvd., 850 200 2260
4. Silver Sands Factory Stores, 10562 Emerald Coast Pkwy., 850 654 9771
5. Southern Star Dolphin Cruise, Highway 98 E., Harborwalk Marina, 850 837 7741
6. Destin History & Fishing Museum, 108 Stahlman Ave., 850 837 6611
7. Emerald Bay Golf Club, 4781 Clubhouse Dr., 850 837 5197
8. Kelly Plantation Golf Club, 307 Kelly Plantation Dr., 800 811 6757
9. Gator Beach, 20001 Emerald Coast Pkwy., 850 837 4781
10. Dockside Water Sports, 288 Harbor Blvd., 850 428 3313

FAMILIES



"Not only did we see dolphins (too many to count!), but we were very pleased with **Southern Star Dolphin Cruise's** boat, crew and captain. The boat itself is climate-controlled on the middle deck. It also has a glass bottom section and an upper deck that is under a canopy."—TripAdvisor Member, Glasgow, Ky.

Southern Star Dolphin Cruise, Highway 98 East at Harborwalk Village and Marina, 850 837 7741

"The water at **Henderson Beach State Park** was a beautiful clear green, just like in the pictures. The sand was as white as snow. Our family enjoyed a nice picnic under the covered picnic decks, and there was plenty of room for parking. It costs just \$4 to get in."—TripAdvisor Member, Marshall, Texas

Henderson Beach State Park, 17000 Emerald Coast Pkwy., 850 837 7550

"**The Track** is great if you are looking for something the whole family can do. We played a round of mini-golf. Children under three are free. Our kids went around on the stroller and both of them liked looking at all the animals and waterfalls."—TripAdvisor Member

The Track Family Fun Center, 1125 Hwy. 98 E., 850 654 4668

"The sand was as white as snow."

ROMANCE



"The **Village of Baytowne Wharf** was so warm and inviting, and the sunset was especially awesome. The food, as well as the music, was great."—TripAdvisor Member, Alabama

Village of Baytowne Wharf, Destin, 850 267 8000

"We are locals, and when we want to do something romantic, we pack a basket of fruit and cheese and a bottle of wine, and head down to the **beach** about an hour before sunset. By that time, folks are leaving the beach."—TripAdvisor Member, Destin

The Beach at Sunset

Spend the day shopping together at the **Destin Commons**, an outdoor mall that features over 80 different retail stores.

Destin Commons, 4300 Legendary Dr., 850 337 8700

Where to PLAY



BUDGET

See 100 gators at **Gator Beach** ... for free!

Gator Beach, 20001 Emerald Coast Pkwy., 850 837 4781

"As an experienced outlet shopper, I would rate the **Silver Sands Factory Stores** at the top. I checked out their website first, and printed off a coupon for a 'Passport to Savings' brochure, which gave me discounts for certain purchases."
—TripAdvisor Member, Canton, Ohio

Silver Sands Factory Stores, 10562 Emerald Coast Pkwy., 850 654 9771

Instead of chartering a boat, "just fish off of the **Destin Bridge**."—TripAdvisor Member

Destin Bridge

TripAdvisor members have posted more than 1,380,000 photos on the site. The good, the bad and the very candid. It's almost like being there!



ADVENTURE

"Cross a small bridge to **Jolee Island Nature Park**. There are trails and a wooden structure for playing."—TripAdvisor Member, Houston, Texas

Jolee Island Nature Park

"**Big Kahuna's Water and Adventure Park** has a lot of really fun waterslides and tube rides! After the thrill of rushing down the many slides, you can relax in the lazy river, which goes around the entire park. Or, you can just wade in the wave pool."—TripAdvisor Member, Virginia Beach, Va.

Big Kahuna's Water and Adventure Park, 1007 Hwy. 98 E., 850 837 8319 (Open seasonally. Please call for schedule.)

"**Boogies Water Sports** offers pontoon boat rentals—a fun experience that few vacationers typically get to experience. You can take the pontoon boat around the harbor or the bay, or you can anchor at Crab Island, which is a beautiful, huge sand bar, where the water is about knee- to waist-deep!"—TripAdvisor Member, Atlanta, Ga.

Boogie Water Sports, Highway 98, 850 654 4497

"...really fun waterslides and tube rides!"



EDUCATIONAL/HISTORICAL

At the **Destin History & Fishing Museum**, you can get a sense of the city's history (like how folks lived before electricity) and the importance of fishing to the community (from antique fishing rods to a 100-foot wall of record catches).

Destin History & Fishing Museum, 108 Stahlman Ave., 850 837 6611

"I strongly recommend arriving at the **Gulfarium** at noon. We were able to see the Dolphin Show, the Sea Lion Show, the Shark Feeding, the Multi-Species Show, and the Touch Tank—all in succession, with a few minutes in between to see the other exhibits. We were there about two hours total, and felt like we got to see everything, without rushing."
—TripAdvisor Member, Birmingham, Ala.

Florida's Gulfarium, 1010 Miracle Strip Pkwy., Fort Walton Beach, 850 243 9046

Visit the **Air Force Armament Museum** to view displays that include current planes, all the way back to a B-17 World War II bomber.

Air Force Armament Museum, 100 Museum Drive, 850 651 1808



RELAXATION

"Drive a little east and visit **Grayton Beach and Seaside**. Seaside is a quaint little town, which is very nice to walk around."—TripAdvisor Member, Niceville, Fla.

Grayton Beach and Seaside

"**Regatta Bay Golf and Country Club** is a very well manicured course. Excellent layout—challenging and fun, but not ridiculously unfair."—TripAdvisor Member, Indianapolis

Regatta Bay Golf and Country Club, 465 Regatta Bay Blvd., 850 337 8080

"Visit **James W. Lee Park** for its gorgeous white sand beach. Go here to have a relaxed picnic (plenty of picnic tables!)"—TripAdvisor Member

James W. Lee Park, 3510 Scenic Hwy. 98

What's the **TOUR**

How to Get Around



"**Taxis** are not metered in Destin. You pay for your cab ride based on a zone system, and there is a \$5 minimum because destinations are generally very close."—
TripAdvisor Member

When you're **driving**, "remember that the Emerald Coast Parkway is known to the locals as Highway 98, and it goes from the Destin Bridge to Panama City Beach. In the Harbor Area, Highway 98 is named Harbor Boulevard. From Airport Road East to Sandestin, the street is named Emerald Coast Parkway, but it is all Highway 98."—TripAdvisor Member

"For a nice afternoon or evening cruise, I would choose the **Southern Star Dolphin Cruises**. They ALWAYS see dolphins."—
TripAdvisor Member

Want more information on Destin? TripAdvisor.com offers free weekly e-mail updates filled with new deals, reviews and articles for Destin or any other destination you choose.

WHERE to eat

TOP 10 Restaurants

1. McGuire's Irish Pub & Brewery, 33 Hwy. 98, 850 650 0000
2. Another Broken Egg Cafe, 9100 Baytowne Wharf Blvd., 850 622 2050
3. Callahan's Restaurant & Deli, 950 Gulf Shore Dr., 850 837 6328
4. Pompano Joe's, 2237 Scenic Gulf Hwy., 850 837 2224
5. Bonefish Grill, 4447 Commons Dr., 850 650 3161
6. La Paz Restaurant & Cantina, 950 Gulf Shore Dr., 850 837 2247
7. Louisiana Lagniappe, 775 Gulf Shore Dr., 850 837 0881
8. Ciao Bella Pizza DA Guglielmo, 29 Hwy. 98 E., 850 654 9815
9. Fat Clemenza's, 12273 US 98, 850 650 5980
10. Donut Hole, 635 Hwy. 98 E., 850 837 8824

FAMILIES

"I brought my family to **Fisherman's Wharf**. We were seated promptly, despite being in the middle of the dinner rush. Delicious."—
TripAdvisor Member, Gulfport, Miss.

Fisherman's Wharf, 210-D Miracle Strip Pkwy., 850 654 4766

"Loved **Joe's Crab Shack**! Family-friendly, nice folks, loved the floor show, and the food is good. Try the grilled shrimp. Wish I had some now!"—TripAdvisor Member

Joe's Crab Shack, 14055 Emerald Coast Pkwy, 850 650 1882

"...a 5-star experience the whole way."

"Everything at **Bonefish Grill** was prepared and presented with excellence. The tastes were amazing. Our waiter was fantastic. He treated our 3- and 5-year-old granddaughters (who were very well-behaved) like they were people."—
TripAdvisor Member, South Carolina

Bonefish Grill, 4447 Commons Drive, 850 650 3161

ROMANCE

"Dining at the **Marlin Grill** was a 5-star experience the whole way. The staff was very friendly, and our waiter was excellent. He knew the menu very well and suggested some excellent wine. Overall, it was a great experience."—TripAdvisor Member, Paducah, Ky.

Marlin Grill, 9100 Baytowne Wharf Blvd., 850 351 1990

My husband and I eat at **Pompano Joe's** every time we visit Destin. The location is right on the beach, and you can feel the warm sea breezes blowing through the big, open windows. The portions are hearty and the service is good. This is the way a beach restaurant should be!"—TripAdvisor Member, Hoschtton, Ga.

Pompano Joe's, 2237 Scenic Gulf Hwy., 850 837 2224

"Everything about **Cuvee Beach Cellar and Wine Bar** is outstanding—food, wine, martinis, etc. If you are in the area, you really must try it!"—TripAdvisor Member, Tampa, Fla.

Cuvee Beach Cellar and Wine Bar, 36120 Emerald Coast Pkwy., 850 650 8900

"This is the way a beach restaurant should be!"

WHERE to eat



BUDGET



"The food is really good" at **Another Broken Egg Cafe**, "but be forewarned: The portions are huge! My husband and I really should have shared one meal, because it was way too much food. You really won't leave here hungry."—TripAdvisor Member, Atlanta, Ga.

Another Broken Egg Cafe, 9100 Baytowne Wharf Blvd., 850 622 2050

"The food at **McGuire's Irish Pub & Brewery** was fantastic and not overpriced. The ambiance is pure McGuire's, with thousands of dollar bills hanging from the ceiling. You can't believe it until you see it. It's just so original and good."—TripAdvisor Member, Atlanta, Ga.

McGuire's Irish Pub & Brewery, 33 Hwy. 98 E., 850 650 0000

"If you don't go to Destin for the seafood, go for the pizza! **Ciao Bella Pizza DA Guglielmo** is a winner with a wonderful cross between gourmet and fast food. The pizzas have a terrific flavor that can be subtle or powerful, depending on the toppings. The salads are great."—TripAdvisor Member, Carlton, Ga.

Ciao Bella Pizza DA Guglielmo, 29 Hwy. 98 E., 850 654 9815

HEALTH-CONSCIOUS



"My husband is vegan, and the **Jasmine Thai** is the only restaurant that we ever go to! The service is exceptional, very friendly and attentive. It is a family-owned and -run restaurant."—TripAdvisor Member, Florida

Jasmine Thai Restaurant, 4424 Commons Drive E., 850 269 0185

"The food at **Vin Tj Wine Boutique & Bistro** is consistently great. You can also order 'small plates' like cheese selections and other appetizers to pair with your wine. The wait staff is knowledgeable about what makes a good pair."—TripAdvisor Member, Montgomery, Ala.

Vin Tj Wine Boutique & Bistro, 10859 Emerald Coast Pkwy., 850 650 9820

Dewey Destin Seafood offers "fresh seafood and outdoor waterside dining. We were referred to it by friends familiar with the area. We would rate this a 'Don't Miss' dining experience!"—TripAdvisor Member

Dewey Destin Seafood, 9 Calhoun Ave., 850 837 7575

HIDDEN GEMS



"No other place comes close" to **Fat Clemenza's**! "I had a pepperoni calzone bigger than my plate—literally. The homemade sausage and pepperoni pizza pie was the best I've ever had!"—TripAdvisor Member, Houston, Texas

Fat Clemenza's, 12273 U.S. Hwy 98 W., 850 650 5980

"This is definitely where the locals eat. **Callahan's Restaurant & Deli** is very good, very reasonable, and you get a lot of food. The shrimp salad is out of this world! My best advice is if you are planning to eat there, you better go early, or you'll have to wait."—TripAdvisor Member, Atlanta, Ga.

Callahan's Restaurant & Deli, 950 Gulf Shore Dr., 850 837 6328

"I've been going to Destin for about 17 years now and have made **Donut Hole** a definite stop every year. I used to joke that I could eat seafood three meals a day. So when I was at the Donut Hole last, I had to try the crab omelet to put that statement to the test. It was so good!"—TripAdvisor Member, Atlanta, Ga.

Donut Hole, 635 Hwy. 98, 850 837 8824

SPECIAL EVENTS



Immerse yourself in native culture during **Musical Echoes**, an annual festival devoted to the beauty of the Native American flute. The event includes concerts, flute lessons and flute-making competitions. (April 24 – 26)

Musical Echoes, Fort Walton Landing, Fort Walton Beach, 850 243 4405, <http://www.musicalechoes.org>

Boating enthusiasts won't want to miss the **Catalina 22 National Championships**, hosted by the Fort Walton Yacht Club. The event includes several races for different fleets, as well as an awards and buffet dinner. (May 23 – 28)

Catalina 22 National Championships, Fort Walton Beach, 850 243 7102, <http://www.fwyc.org>

Food, arts & crafts, local band concerts and, most importantly, pirates await you at the **Billy Bowlegs Festival**. Don't miss the torchlight parade and the skirmish between Captain Billy and the mayor! (June 4 – 8)

Billy Bowlegs Festival, Fort Walton Beach, 850 244 8191, <http://www.fwbchamber.org>

The day goes to the dogs during **Dog Daze 2009**, a yearly event devoted to human's best friend. The day includes everything from costume contests and races to doggie yoga. (September 12)

Dog Daze 2009, Fort Walton Landing, Fort Walton Beach, 850 244 8191, <http://www.fwbchamber.org>

Where to **STAY**



FAMILIES

“We had a superb and spacious two-bedroom condo at the **Westwinds at Sandestin**. The condo was very comfortable and spacious for all five of us.”—TripAdvisor Member, Manchester, England
Westwinds at Sandestin Resort, 9300 Hwy. 98 W., 800 622 1038

“My family loved the **Candlewood Suites!** The room was nicely decorated and looked very clean. The bed was very comfortable, and I loved the fact that they had flat screen TVs in the room and DVD players. You could rent movies if you wanted to stay in!”—TripAdvisor Member, Brandon, Miss.
Candlewood Suites Destin-Miramar Beach, 11396 U.S. Hwy 98 W., 850 337 3770

“Our room at the **Holiday Inn Destin** opened out into a bar/general fun area. So we could put the kids to bed, and sit right outside having cocktails, with no worries.”—TripAdvisor Member, Chattanooga, Tenn.
Holiday Inn Destin On the Beach, 1020 Hwy. 98 E., 850 837 6181

Have questions about Destin? Get insider advice from local experts in our forums. The majority of questions are answered within 24 hours.



ROMANCE

“My husband and I have been coming to Destin for years, but just recently found **Inn on Destin Harbor**, an adorable inn. The views are breathtaking and so relaxing. The staff members are like family.”—TripAdvisor Member, Texas
Inn on Destin Harbor, 402 Harbor Blvd., 800 874 0470

“**ResortQuest Nantucket Rainbow Cottages** is a unique set of cottages just across the street from the beautiful Destin beaches. We found it to be clean, well-equipped and convenient. When we go back next summer, we plan to ask for the same unit. Everything worked, so why mess with a good thing?”—TripAdvisor Member, Missouri
ResortQuest Nantucket Rainbow Cottages, 35000 Emerald Coast Pkwy., 888 909 6807

“The **Emerald Grande** was beyond our expectations. The resort is phenomenal. We stayed in a one bedroom, which was perfect for us. The room was nice and had all the luxuries of home. The beds were super comfortable. We didn't want to go home!”—TripAdvisor Member, New Orleans, La.
Emerald Grande Harbor Walk Village, 10 Harbor Blvd., 866 705 1478

BUDGET

“The **Comfort Inn** is a great value. The room was spacious and clean, although the decor is a little outdated.”—TripAdvisor Member, Atlanta, Ga.
Comfort Inn, 19001 Emerald Coast Pkwy., 850 654 8611

The **Wingate Inn – Destin** “would definitely be a bargain, if you don't have to be ‘directly’ on the beach. I would stay here again anytime!”—TripAdvisor Member, Alabama
Wingate Inn – Destin, 117 Palm St., 850 654 4678

“At the **Amalfi Coast**, the condo was very nice and had everything we needed. The walk to the beach wasn't long at all. The pools were fabulous, and my kids had fun and met new friends everyday.”—TripAdvisor Member, Missouri
Amalfi Coast Resort, 778 Scenic Gulf Dr., 850 267 9918

“The beach is like powdered sugar”

LUXURY

“The one-bedroom at **The Beachside Towers** was lovely. We opened the windows, and slept peacefully to the sound of the surf. We awoke to sun, cries of the sea gulls and the surf. Our windows and patio faced south/southeast, and the sun was welcomed after a long winter in Iowa. The beach is like powdered sugar and very clean.”—TripAdvisor Member, Bettendorf, Iowa
Beachside Towers at Sandestin, 9300 Emerald Coast Pkwy. W., 800 622 1038

“It is my sixth year staying at the **Edgewater Beach Condominium**, and the vacation was again excellent. The pool area and beach areas have been completely restored from the hurricanes, and the Edgewater complex has been updated to what I consider to be the finest vacation spot in Destin.”—TripAdvisor Member, Atlanta, Ga.
Edgewater Beach Condominium, 291 Scenic Gulf Drive, 800 822 4929

“Upon entering the **Hilton Sandestin Beach, Golf Resort and Spa**, we knew instantly that this was a location at which we really wanted to stay. If you're looking for the resort ‘feel’ on your trip, the Sandestin Hilton has it.”—TripAdvisor Member, Indiana
Hilton Sandestin Beach, Golf Resort and Spa, 4000 Sandestin Blvd., 800 367 1271

Where to **STAY**



HIDDEN GEMS



“Where do I begin? From the time you check in until the time you check out, you feel so welcomed. The staff does an excellent job of making you feel at home. Once you get out of your car, you never have to get into it again. The **Courtyard Sandestin at Grand Boulevard** offers free transportation to the beach and to the village of Baytowne Wharf. I can’t say enough good things about this property!”—TripAdvisor Member, Orlando, Fla.

**Courtyard Sandestin at Grand Boulevard,
100 Grand Blvd., 850 650 7411**

“My husband and I, and our children, have stayed at **The Islander** for the past 15 years. We love it. The staff is wonderful and makes us feel welcome. Now that the kids are old enough, they are taking their families and friends to The Islander. This is the best compliment I can give it. If the kids approve, then it is special.”—TripAdvisor Member, O’Fallon, Ill.

**The Islander, 502 Gulf Shore Drive,
800 477 8837**

“I LOVE THIS COMMUNITY! I have stayed here three different times and each week-long vacation was incredible. Love the easy access to the beach, and the condo was clean and comfortable. I was even allowed to bring my two little four-legged angels with me. If you are looking for one of the most beautiful beach getaways, **Maravilla Resort** is the place.”—TripAdvisor Member, New Market, Ala.

**Maravilla Resort, 2606 Scenic Gulf Dr.,
913 338 2372**

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