



FORGOTTEN  
SHORE  
Part II, p. 58

WHERE TO  
GET LOST  
Part III, p. 62

DEEP-FRIED  
MIAMI  
Part IV, p. 68

# THE BEST *of* HIDDEN FLORIDA

There's more to the Sunshine State than towering condos, busy strip malls, and crowded shores. You just need to know where to look

Photographs by **TERRY MANIER**

**When most of us think of Florida,** the mental image usually contains concrete and loads of tourists from New Jersey. But if you're willing to look *just a little* deeper, there's another Florida all around. It's a rich, rare, and original place that, in fact, rewards those who go looking. It's the kind of place William Bartram would recognize. Bartram, who in 1774 could be seen tromping around the area with his blue waistcoat and thick head of hair, was Florida's first tourist.

Sure, there were earlier émigrés to Florida. The prehistoric Mound Builders along the shorelines who might have been there for five thousand years, then mysteriously departed. Or, later, the Calusa. And it's hard not to invoke the grumpy Spanish conquistadores, who fetched up in the late 1550s and early 1560s at Pensacola and St. Augustine in search of gold for the king and souls for the Church.

Bartram, on the other hand, arrived slightly more than two hundred years later, not as a government official or missionary or trader. He desired no claim on the land other than to record what he saw in his diary, *Bartram's Travels*, which remains both a tantalizing glimpse into the past and a reminder of just how much of a wild, hidden place Florida still is today. He traveled the state and region for three years, enjoying the place and writing a precise record of Florida's flora and fauna before returning home to Philadelphia.

He swam with manatees in the clear freshwater springs bubbling in the near-rain forests of Florida's palmetto groves. He explored the vast and sprawling St. Marys River system, and took a boat out of Mobile Bay and over to Pensacola: a place awash with Spaniards, British colonists who now oversaw the town, French Acadians from their colonies farther west, Creoles from the Caribbean, and slaves from West Africa. That same wondrous, natural, diverse Florida is still there, too, sitting just outside a usual visitor's sight.

While, as a point of law, you can no longer get too close to the protected manatees, that doesn't mean you can't snorkel *near* them in the state's still-clear freshwater springs. You can explore the endless grass sea of the Everglades and have the place to yourself, or paddle from the tip of the state at Flamingo to Everglades City along the Wilderness Waterway, camping on little elevated "chickee" stands out in the watery shimmer of a world just slightly submerged. But hidden Florida isn't all wilds and water. Take a seat at Posey's seafood shack in tiny Panacea for a fried grouper sandwich that will blow you away. Grab a beer at the wonderfully cool

and dark—and virtually tourist-free—Captain Tony's in Key West. Or shack up at the Gasparilla Inn and rise with the tides or when breakfast beckons. Surely Mr. Bartram would approve. —**Donovan Webster**

**Lonesome Palm**  
A roadside view of  
cattle country near  
Cedar Key

# Forgotten Shore

Fernandina Beach has seen its share of ups and downs, but lately this idyllic coastal town has been rising  
by MIKE GRUDOWSKI



“This place was pretty intriguing to me,” says Kevin McCarthy, gazing out over the broad sweep of Amelia River waterfront. A master boat captain who looks the part—ruddy from sun, sturdy of bearing—McCarthy washed ashore in Fernandina Beach as a teenager from Gloucester, Massachusetts, more than four decades ago. For the last ten years he and his wife, a ninth-generation Amelia Islander, have run Amelia River Cruises, floating narrated history-and-wildlife tours along the shores of Amelia and Cumberland, the next barrier island to the north. “In 1968 it was just a small shrimping community,” McCarthy says, his voice still revealing a hint of Gloucester. “When a new kid showed up in town, everybody assumed he was here because his father got hired at the paper mill.” He leans forward slightly to make his point: “We chose Fernandina.”

McCarthy’s family wasn’t the first to fall for Fernandina Beach, the only real town on Amelia Island, a thirteen-mile-long barrier spit just south of the Georgia border—they missed that privilege by roughly four thousand years—and they certainly weren’t the last. These days the town’s drowsy Old Florida charms come with some upgrades: a generous helping of creature comforts. Dozens of brightly revived Victorians, the remnants of post-Civil War boom times, line its quiet Spanish moss-draped lanes; some of them are now bed-and-breakfasts. An impressive crop of garden-to-plate menus provides more sophisticated dining options than Fernandina ever had, it’s safe to say, during its days as a little shrimping village. Stylish eateries like 29 South, run by Scotty Schwartz, an award-winning chef from Atlanta, serve up such temptations as Thai bouillabaisse and crostini with honey-broiled, blue-cheese-stuffed fresh figs. The tin-ceilinged 1878-vintage Palace Saloon, Florida’s oldest continuously operating watering hole and the last in the state to serve legal cocktails before Prohibition took effect in 1920, is still mixing up sidecars and Sazeracs today.

Last summer, downtown was populated by cartoonish sculptures of shrimp, the town’s crustacean mascot; Fernandina describes itself, with considerable pride, as the birthplace of the modern shrimping industry, “the port where shrimp was first marketed to the world,” McCarthy says. There’s a shrimp festival every May, a springtime chamber music festival, a series of autumn jazz concerts, a couple of community theater groups. It all makes for a heady combination, the kind of place that makes a visitor gaze around and think, *What if?*

“We’ve had thirty-five couples who’ve stayed with us and then decided to move here,” says Theresa Hamilton, coproprietor with her husband, Bill, of the Fairbanks House, a four-story, twenty-room Italianate mansion built in 1885 that they have run as a bed-and-



Sleep Inn  
The Fairbanks House, an elegant bed-and-breakfast not far from downtown. Opposite page: The lobster corn dog at 29 South.



# Hangouts and Hideouts

Don't miss these happening Fernandina Beach spots

## Beech Street Grill

In 1889, William Bell, half of a locally renowned pair of identical twins and harbor pilots, built for his bride an ornate two-story home at the edge of what's now the Historic District that epitomized Fernandina's Victorian golden-age finery at its peak: all verandas and bay windows, marble mantels and heart-pine gingerbread. For the last twenty years, the Bell house has been the home of Beech Street Grill, a fail-safe dinner recommendation. The seafood is fresh, the wine list expansive, the live piano music an elegant touch. 801 Beech St., beechstreetgrill.com

## Café Karibo

Sitting on the patio at a black metal table on a sultry afternoon, while a black cat ambles past a cast-iron fountain and oak branches throw shadows against an aquamarine wall, you could swear you were in Key West, rather than five hundred miles north of it. Karibo's offerings lean heavily toward the soup/salad/sandwiches end of the culinary spectrum, but it's fresh and tasty stuff—try the Big Bella, a sandwich combining marinated portabella, artichoke hearts, and red onion on ciabatta—served up in laid-back surroundings that leave you little choice but to downshift awhile. 27 N. Third St., cafekaribo.com

## Palace Saloon

With its signature peg-legged pirate statue guarding the front door of the 1878 Victorian facade, it's hard to overlook the Palace, which claims bragging rights as "Florida's oldest continuously operated drinking establishment." It's worth stopping in for the period ambience alone: a forty-foot bar that brewery founder Adolphus Busch helped design, carved mahogany female figures overseeing the bartenders, embossed tin ceilings, and wall murals

## Local Legends

From left: Mike Lee of Atlantic Seafood; Arthur "Arty" Steinig at the Palace Saloon; the bouillabaisse at 29 South; a shrimp boat in the harbor

of figures drawn from Shakespeare, Dickens, and buccaneer lore. House specialties include rummy Pirates Punch and a potent Eight Flags Martini. Legend has it that Carnegies visiting from Cumberland Island would use a gas-fired lighter that once hung above a counter to light dollar bills, which in turn lit their cigars. Whether or not the story's true is almost beside the point. 117 Centre St., thepalacesaloon.com

## T-Rays Burger Station

An unapologetically down-to-earth locals' favorite for breakfast and lunch in what once was—and continues to look exactly like—an Exxon station, complete with decommissioned gas pumps still standing out front. Inside, the former service bays now hold tables where first-rate burgers, fried chicken and shrimp, and down-home breakfasts are served up hot Monday through Saturday. 202 S. Eighth St., 904-261-6310

## 29 South

"Old-school with a modern kick" is how owner, chef, and Atlanta transplant Scotty Schwartz has described the menu at this front-porch, casually chic eatery, which opened downtown in 2005. That translates into a hard-to-pin-down mix of Southern-tinged dishes (a sweet-tea-brined pork chop, fried green tomatoes with goat cheese) with more surprising fare (lobster corn dogs, Thai bouillabaisse so addictive it cries out for a second basket of bread to sop up all the broth). A slow-food pioneer in this corner of Florida, Schwartz takes pride in sourcing ingredients from nearby farms, dairies, and beehives, as well as an organic garden of fruits, vegetables, and herbs right out back. 29 S. Third St., 29southrestaurant.com



breakfast for thirteen years. "Three of them spontaneously. They're like, 'Can you really live like this?' Yeah—it's real. It's not Disney."

That Fernandina Beach is still managing to thrive might be less surprising than the fact that it continues to exist at all. It has survived more near-deaths, boom-and-bust cycles, and catastrophes than some cities a hundred times its size, and nearly every current of American history seems to have touched Amelia Island's shores at one time or another. Eight different flags staked their claim here over the South's deepest natural harbor.

After Jefferson declared an embargo against trade with Europe in 1807, Fernandina hit its decadent stride as a wickedly colorful border town, a bawdy smugglers' paradise where bars and bordellos prospered. "North America's Casablanca," one writer called it. Blackbeard and Jean Lafitte stopped by. Later, President James Monroe dubbed the town "a festering fleshpot." In 1817, a larger-than-life Scottish scoundrel named Gregor MacGregor briefly seized the island while establishing himself as the archetype of a Florida swindler. He raised \$160,000 selling lots in the territory that he didn't own, paid his soldiers with money he had printed, and taught his Spanish wife to master a single sentence of English: "You can go to hell." Through devastating infernos, a yellow fever epidemic, hurricanes, getting bypassed by Henry Flagler's railroad, through Prohibition and the Great Depression, Fernandina has endured.

In fact, in the last few decades since the development of Amelia Island Plantation Resort on the island's south end, followed by the Ritz-Carlton that opened in 1991, Fernandina Beach seems to be booming again. A steady stream of weekenders and second-home owners migrates in from Atlanta and elsewhere in Georgia and Florida, some of them buying and resuscitating vintage houses that nearly got forgotten a century ago. At the same time, sad to say, the shrimping fleet, the wellspring of much of the town's fortunes and charm, is fading. "My father-in-law sold his last shrimp boat around two years ago for fifty thousand dollars," Kevin McCarthy says. "A half-million-dollar boat."

Whether or not the town's last shrimpers can hang on, it seems likely that Fernandina Beach itself will. You can't help but believe that the town will still be getting "discovered" a hundred years from now, and three hundred. There's never been much of a future in betting against it.



# Where to Get Lost

Looking for the Florida that others miss? Look no farther than these hidden hot spots

BBQ  
**Peeble's BBQ**  
Auburndale

Drive down Dixie Highway on the outskirts of Auburndale and you'll see a dilapidated white shack with screen windows, a big woodpile out back, and smoke billowing from an indoor pit. The sight alone is enough to make any true barbecue buff's heart beat a little faster. Go inside, taste the chopped pork and ribs, and you'll understand why Peeble's sits atop the heap of Florida BBQ joints. 863-967-3085

CIGAR BAR  
**King Corona Cigars**  
Ybor City

A café and cigar bar, King Corona sits squarely in historic Ybor City (once the nation's cigar capital), blending Tampa's unique history and multiethnic flavor with the good old-fashioned social interaction of yesteryear. Lounge under the covered patio and enjoy a local, hand-rolled cigar and some conversation. Try a traditional Cuban breakfast, complete with Cuban-style coffee, or lunch on a Cuban sandwich where they originated, right here in Ybor City. After coffee and cigars, opt for a haircut and hot shave before getting on with the day. [kccigarsandcafe.com](http://kccigarsandcafe.com)



COUNTRY DRIVE  
**Canopy Roads of Leon County**  
Tallahassee

Along the nine designated canopy roads that spread out from Tallahassee like the spokes of a wheel, you'll see Indian mounds, Civil War forts, antebellum houses,

historic quail plantations, and Spanish ruins. But the canopy roads themselves are the show stealer. These ancient allées of grandiose, moss-bearded oaks meander through the Red Hill region, many of them paved only with red clay. They were first carved out over centuries of use by the Apalachees, then used as trading routes by the

Spanish, then by planters as oxcart roads during the cotton boom. Now the roads don't lead to much of anything, which is exactly the point. [leoncountyfl.gov](http://leoncountyfl.gov)

CRACKER GRUB  
**Yearling Restaurant**  
Hawthorne

When you're hungry for something that started out in a swamp and ended up in a deep fryer, the Yearling Restaurant is ready for you. A few miles down County Road 325 from the Cross Creek homestead where Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings typed the novel for which it's named, this roadside Cracker landmark, which first opened in 1952, serves up frog legs, gator tail, and (if you're lucky) cooter, aka soft-shell turtle. If breaded amphibian isn't on your to-do list, treat yourself to venison, sour orange pie, and the music of Willie Green, a septuagenarian who has opened for John Lee Hooker and Eric Clapton and brings Delta-style blues to the knotty-pine dining room Thursday through Sunday. [yearlingrestaurant.net](http://yearlingrestaurant.net)

COUNTRY STORE  
**Bradley's Country Store**  
Tallahassee

Since 1910, four generations of Bradleys have been making sausage—mild, medium, hot, and smoked or fresh. They opened the store in 1927, twelve miles down Centerville Road from Tallahassee. Like their recipes, the store hasn't changed over the years. Along with their liver pudding, hog-head cheese, pork cracklings, and mighty good coarse-ground grits, the Bradleys sell some of the best old-fashioned country sausage anywhere.

Eat there, cook it at home, or have them ship it to you. [bradleyscountrystore.com](http://bradleyscountrystore.com)

DIVE BAR  
**Capt. Tony's**  
Key West

Through several incarnations since it was built in 1852, the building that houses Capt. Tony's served as an icehouse, a morgue, and the telegraph station that announced the sinking of the battleship *Maine*, precipitating the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. There were also stints as a cigar factory, a brothel, a speakeasy, a gambling den, and finally a dive bar. It housed the original Sloppy Joe's, where Hemingway hung out and where his third wife, Martha Gellhorn, supposedly paid the bartender \$20 to introduce her to him. In 1958 a charter boat captain, Tony Terracino, who had come to Key West while on the run from New Jersey bookies after a gambling scheme went awry, bought the place and turned it into its current incarnation. It's dark and dusty, and absolutely reeks with history. [capttonyssaloon.com](http://capttonyssaloon.com)

DINER  
**Duck's Dam Diner**  
Moss Bluff

A nondescript roadside diner on a back road in the outskirts of the Ocala National Forest, Duck's Dam Diner has been serving up the finest diner eats in Florida for the past decade. It's the sort of place where the staff gets worried when a regular doesn't show up at the normal hour. Duck's will serve early-rising fishermen a burger at seven a.m. or breakfast in mid-afternoon. The biscuits and gravy are the best

around, so stop by for a fill-up on your way to the woods. 352-288-8332

FISHING HOLE  
**Marquesas Keys**  
Key West

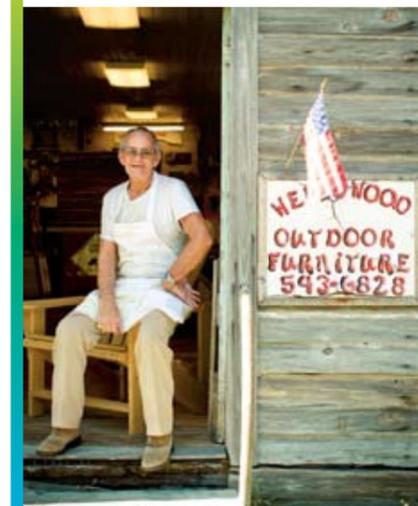
It requires a thirty-mile run across an often choppy Boca Grande Channel, but if a flats slam (tarpon, permit, and bonefish) is on your bucket list, the run to the Marquesas Keys is well worth it. Fly casters flock to the atoll every spring for shots at tarpon up to ninety pounds in Mooney Harbor and the surrounding flats. Permit topping forty pounds are another real possibility, and the Marquesas offer the best chance for bonefish in the lower Keys, says Captain Steven Impallomeni, whose clients have scored double fly slams by mid-afternoon. 305-292-9837

FRESHWATER SPRINGS  
**Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park**  
Tallahassee

There's archaeological evidence that humans have been frequenting Wakulla Springs for 15,000 years. And other than a lodge built in 1937 by Florida financier Edward Ball and a few glass-bottomed boats, not much has changed since those first visitors arrived. There's plenty of swimming to be enjoyed in one of the world's largest and deepest freshwater springs, and loads of wildlife along the hiking trails. [floridastateparks.org](http://floridastateparks.org)

HOTEL VERANDA  
**Tampa Bay Hotel**  
Tampa

Now part of the University of Tampa and the Henry B. Plant Museum, the Tampa



Nice Catch From top: Wetting a line; a grouper sandwich from Cook's Cafe; a local furniture vendor

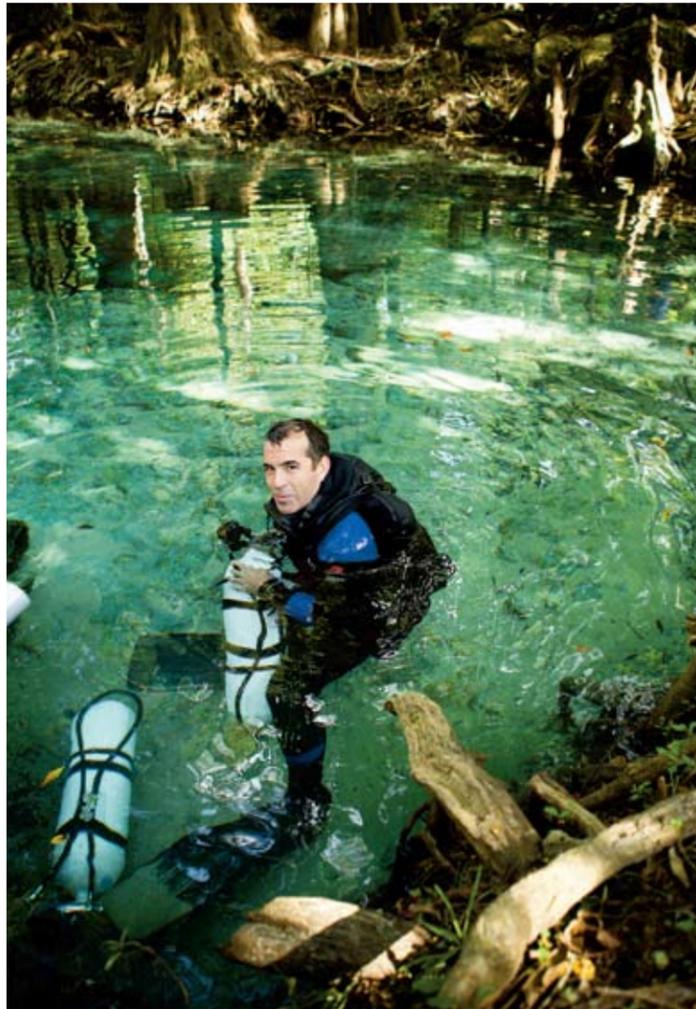
Small Towns

## Cedar Key

A tiny fishing village with full-time charm

Admirers of this Gulf Coast island hamlet have been remarking that Cedar Key is like the Key West of forty or fifty years ago for, well, what seems like forty or fifty years. Three miles off the Big Bend mainland and surrounded by salt marsh and wildlife refuges, the town (year-round population under 1,000) has survived more than its share of near-death blows: the demise of its prosperous nineteenth-century pencil industry, the flight to deeper harbors of the merchant ships, and an 1896 hurricane that all but erased it from the map, to name a few. These days Cedar Key's economy draws on clamming—more than two hundred clam farms make it one of the nation's largest sources of the bivalves—as well as artists, writers, and assorted other second-home owners reeled in by its end-of-the-road languor. They come to bird-watch, paddle around uninhabited islets, fish, eat fresh seafood, and soak up the vintage funk at antique haunts like the landmark Island Hotel (built in 1859), where an up-and-comer named Jimmy Buffett used to occasionally serenade passers-by from a balcony. [cedarkey.org](http://cedarkey.org)





Small Towns

## High Springs

Dive in for a glimpse of Old Florida

Unbeknownst to most out-of-staters, Florida is home to hundreds of natural freshwater springs—one of the largest concentrations on earth—which collectively pump out more than eight billion gallons of clean water every day. Many of the

springs also just happen to provide breathtakingly gorgeous stretches of green and blue waterway, world-class playgrounds for inner-tube floaters, canoeists, kayakers, snorkelers, and even cave divers. High Springs has become the de facto capital of all this splashing, convenient to a sweet selection of access points both public (Ichetucknee Springs and O'Leno state parks, Poe Springs) and private (including

Ginnie Springs, home to seven springs of its own). The Santa Fe River town itself is no slouch, either, offering a pleasant mix of antiques shops, galleries, Craftsman houses, canoe outfitters, dive shops, and a popular steak house (Great Outdoors) occupying a restored 1895 opera house. [highsprings.com](http://highsprings.com)



Bay Hotel veranda is one of the last of the great ones that typified Florida resort life from the 1870s through the 1930s. With the hotel serving as a base of operations for the Spanish-American War, Teddy Roosevelt, Rough Riders, and others rocked away on the veranda as they plotted strategy. In more peaceful times, the veranda hosted a cavalcade of boldface names, among them the Prince of Wales, Stephen Crane, and Sarah Bernhardt. [plantmuseum.com](http://plantmuseum.com)

HORSEBACK RIDING

### Ocala National Forest Ocala

Ocala, which bills itself as “The Horse Capital of the World,” is a great place to tour Thoroughbred farms and watch equestrian events. But for a riding experience of your own, head for the Ocala National Forest. There you can hoof it over miles of trails through sandy scrub-pine forests. Ride to Juniper Springs and take a dip in the crystalline sapphire waters before setting up camp for the night. If your timing's right, you might even sight a black bear. [fs.usda.gov/ocala](http://fs.usda.gov/ocala)

JAZZ BAR

### The Warehouse Bar Tallahassee

Housed in a converted warehouse on Gaines Street, the Warehouse Bar holds its Jazz Night every Monday. The house band, the Warehouse Trio, plays originals and jazz standards. But the party really gets started during the second set, when local musicians, music students, and faculty from Florida State and Florida A&M join in with whatever instruments they happen to bring along. There's never a

shortage of fresh talent taking the stage. [850-222-6188](http://850-222-6188)

LAID-BACK LODGING

### Seminole Inn Indiantown

All too rarely does one come across a hotel whose roster of diversions for guests includes “frog gigging.” That's but one reason to check in to the Seminole Inn, a gracious and unlikely Mediterranean Revival hideout in Indiantown, thirty miles northwest of West Palm Beach in the citrus-and-cattle country near Lake Okeechobee. In the 1920s, a Baltimore banker named Solomon Davies Warfield foresaw a glorious future for the town as a railroad hub, and embellished the inn, its crown jewel, with high cypress ceilings, solid brass fixtures, and grand staircases. Warfield's vision for Indiantown never quite blossomed. But he left behind a welcoming home base for bass fishers, hunters, and those just seeking to log some serious time in the porch swing. [seminoleinn.com](http://seminoleinn.com)

LITERARY FIELD TRIP

### Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings House Cross Creek

The Cracker-style cottage on the edge of the orange groves where Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings came in 1928 to farm and write still stands near the Cross Creek community. For over a quarter-century, she called this spot home, and here she wrote *Cross Creek* and *The Yearling*, her Pulitzer-winning novel. The house, still filled with Rawlings's own furniture, has been restored to reflect that period. Go see for yourself what the author called “the essence of an

ancient and secret magic.” [floridastateparks.org](http://floridastateparks.org)

OLD-SCHOOL INN

### Gasparilla Inn Boca Grande

Since its pre-World War I opening on its namesake seven-mile-long Gulf island, the Gasparilla Inn hasn't changed all that much—which is precisely the idea. It remains a quiet, isolated, clubby enclave frequented by the likes of Rockefellers, Du Ponts, Bushes, and others whose names come with Roman numerals attached. During winter-and-spring Social Season, as it's known here, dinner still calls for coats for gents. Swimming, tennis, tarpon fishing, rocking on the porch, evening canasta, and golf on the seaside Pete Dye-designed course occupy the hours. As does stealing a peek at the lobby's clipboard to find out who's arriving that day. [the-gasparilla-inn.com](http://the-gasparilla-inn.com)

OYSTER BAR

### Indian Pass Raw Bar Port St. Joe

Originally built in 1929 as a commissary for a turpentine operation, this back-road raw bar does what a raw bar is supposed to—it serves the freshest seafood in the simplest way. In the eighties, when the owners' wholesale oyster business went bust after a hurricane blew through, they started selling off the remaining oysters out of what was then their gas station, and a raw bar was born. These days the floors are tiled orange and blue for Gator fans. Walk in and grab a beer from the cooler or fill up a pitcher before you sit down. [indianpassrawbar.com](http://indianpassrawbar.com)

PLANTATION TOUR

### Kingsley Plantation Jacksonville

This is not your run-of-the-mill house-museum story. Zephaniah Kingsley married and freed Anna Kingsley, an enslaved woman, in 1811. He gave her management of a plantation and freed their children, eventually moving them to Haiti to avoid the growing legal oppression of freed people of color. There Kingsley and his family built

PRIVATE SHORES

### Useppa Island Useppa

“No bridges, no cars, no crowds” is the slogan of private, residential Useppa Island, near Pine and Captiva islands on the southwest Gulf Coast, west of Fort Myers. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Useppa was the estate of New York advertising and publishing tycoon Barron Collier, who hosted such notables as Vanderbilts,

PRODUCE STAND

### Robert Is Here Fruit Stand Florida City

Robert first started selling cucumbers from his father's roadside farm at age six with a sign that simply said “Robert is here.” Over the past fifty years his produce stand has grown to include a staggering variety of tropical fruits, vegetables, preserves, and some thirty types of honey. The produce is often locally grown, and much of it comes from Robert's family-run farm. And if you're in the market for a milk shake, get ready: You can have one made from any fruit on hand, from key lime to caimito. [robertishere.com](http://robertishere.com)

SEAFOOD SHACK

### Posey's Dockside Panacea

At Posey's Dockside Cafe, at the end of a side road off Highway 98—best known to many as the scenic route from Tallahassee to Apalachicola—there awaits everything one could reasonably ask of a Florida seafood shack: Ice-cold beer. Outdoor tables with a pelican's-eye view of the Panacea marina and Dickerson Bay. A no-nonsense grouper sandwich. Oysters on the half shell. And on weekends, more often than not, some guy with a guitar warbling “A Pirate Looks at



another plantation. After his death, Anna moved back to Jacksonville to take legal action against her late husband's white relatives, who were attempting to get his will nullified. She won, living out the rest of her long life in Jacksonville. [nps.gov](http://nps.gov)

Rothschilds, Thomas Edison, and Gloria Swanson. Nowadays residents, all of them members of the Useppa Island Club, get around their manicured hundred-acre enclave by boat or golf cart, making twenty-minute runs to the mainland for grocer-

40" into a microphone.  
850-713-0014

SPORTING COMPOUND  
**Gilchrist Club**  
Trenton

Sitting on 27,000 acres of diverse game habitat half an hour west of Gainesville, the Gilchrist Club offers its members a Georgia quail plantation experience deep in the heart of Florida and a world away from tourist beaches. Part club, part luxury hunting lodge, Gilchrist feels like having your own private plantation with, shall we say, a little less overhead. Quail is the staple here, but you can also hunt whitetails, wild boar, native Osceola turkey, and alligator. [gilchristclub.com](http://gilchristclub.com)

STONE CRAB SHACK  
**Star Fish Company**  
Cortez

Stone crabs show up on any Florida foodie's short list. And though there are many places to eat them, from one end of the state to the other, it's hard to beat Cortez, the last remaining historic commercial fishing village on the Florida Gulf Coast. More specifically, eat a plate of them at the Star Fish Company as the sun sets over Sarasota Bay. [starfishcompany.com](http://starfishcompany.com)

SWAMP TOUR  
**Okefenokee Swamp**  
Maclemmy

Although most of the sprawling, 400,000-acre Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge lies within Georgia, Florida can still claim legitimate ties to the great blackwater bog. The refuge's southern boundaries spill over into Florida, which contains much of the one-million-acre Greater



**Acting Birdy**  
A pair of bird dogs on the grounds of the Gilchrist Club

Okefenokee Ecosystem of which the swamp is a part. In any case, a dotted line on a map matters little once you're paddling through this wonderland of old-growth cypress stands, spongy islands, flooded prairies, and other habitat niches that shelter hundreds of species of critters, including Florida black bears and endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers. Some 120 miles of canoe trails crisscross the refuge, linking eight covered wooden-platform campsites. [fwcs.gov/okefenokee](http://fwcs.gov/okefenokee)

SWIMMING HOLE  
**Venetian Pool**  
Coral Gables

Johnny Weismuller and Esther Williams are no longer meeting for a quick dip in the Venetian Pool in Coral Gables, but the beauty of the spot, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, remains. Created in 1923 from an abandoned quarry pit and fed by artesian wells, the pool has been beckoning to swimmers ever since. During summer, its 820,000 gallons of water drain out every evening, only to be replenished by the subterranean aquifer. Surrounded by waterfalls, porticoes, and caves, the Venetian ranks among the choicest swimming holes on the planet. [coralgablesvenetianpool.com](http://coralgablesvenetianpool.com)

WILD BEACH  
**St. Joseph Peninsula State Park**  
Port St. Joe

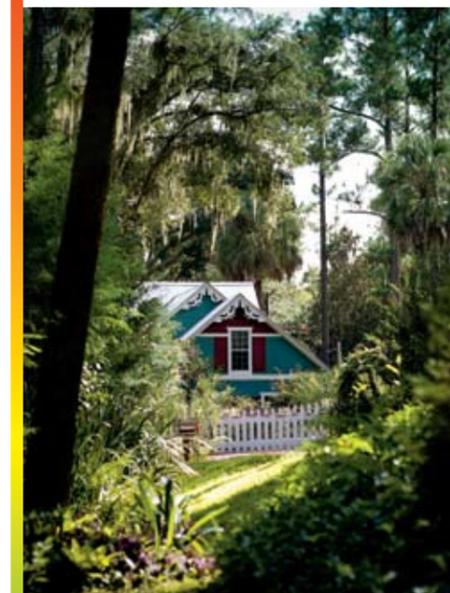
Jutting north along the Panhandle like a long fishhook, St. Joseph Peninsula State Park has one of the most dazzling and least populated beaches anywhere. Snow-white dunes loom over the shore, and waves lap at nine

miles of Gulf-front sand within the park's 2,500 acres. In summer, loggerhead turtles nest on the beach, and swimmers dive for scallops in St. Joseph Bay. Come autumn, thousands of migrating hawks pass through, banking west to trace the Gulf Coast to Mexico and points beyond. The peninsula is also a sweet place to kayak, surf-cast, camp, or take a long hike through dense scrub-pine woods. Eight bayside cabins each sleep up to seven people and come with screened porches and fireplaces. Not surprisingly, they're also notoriously tough to book. [floridastateparks.org/stjoseph](http://floridastateparks.org/stjoseph)

WRECK DIVE  
**Troy Spring**  
Branford

In the pre-railroad days of the nineteenth century, paddle-wheel steamboat traffic on the Suwannee River brought mail, provisions, and contact with the wider world to remote Florida settlements. Captain James M. Tucker was one river man who became a legend of sorts before the Civil War when he piloted his 125-foot steamer, the *Madison*, upstream to White Springs, almost to Georgia, greatly expanding the length of the Suwannee considered navigable. In 1863, Tucker ordered the *Madison* sunk in the shallow run at Troy Spring to prevent it from being captured by the Union Navy. Today, divers can inspect what is thought to be the *Madison*'s remaining skeleton: a ribcage of wooden timbers and metal spikes. [floridastateparks.org/troyspring/](http://floridastateparks.org/troyspring/)

**Contributors:**  
**Ronald Coleman,**  
**Mike Grudowski, Robert Hicks, and Dave Lear**



**Inland Paradise** From top: Micanopy locals; hidden house; baked goods from Mosswood Farm Store

Small Towns

# Micanopy

This inland town stays wonderfully sleepy

Every once in a great while, this tiny onetime citrus village just southeast of Gainesville has a fleeting brush with glamour. Tom Petty passed through before hitting it big, and twenty years ago the town convincingly played the part of hayseed (and fictional) Grady, South Carolina, in the Michael J. Fox comedy *Doc Hollywood*. But most people come to Micanopy—pronounced “Mick-a-nope-ee”—because the place, Florida's oldest inland settlement, usually feels like modernity has passed right on by. Quirky shops peddle antiques and rare books along the mossy oaks and shaded sidewalks of Cholokka Boulevard. A faded Depression-era Coca-Cola mural endures on the wall of an old warehouse turned history museum. Cracker cottages with rusted tin roofs and a handful of grandiose Victorians (such as the restored Herlong Mansion inn) exude a drowsy, moldering charm that preservationist types, including a recent wave of transplants who cashed out of the Keys, find hard to resist. [welcometo.micanopy.com](http://welcometo.micanopy.com)

