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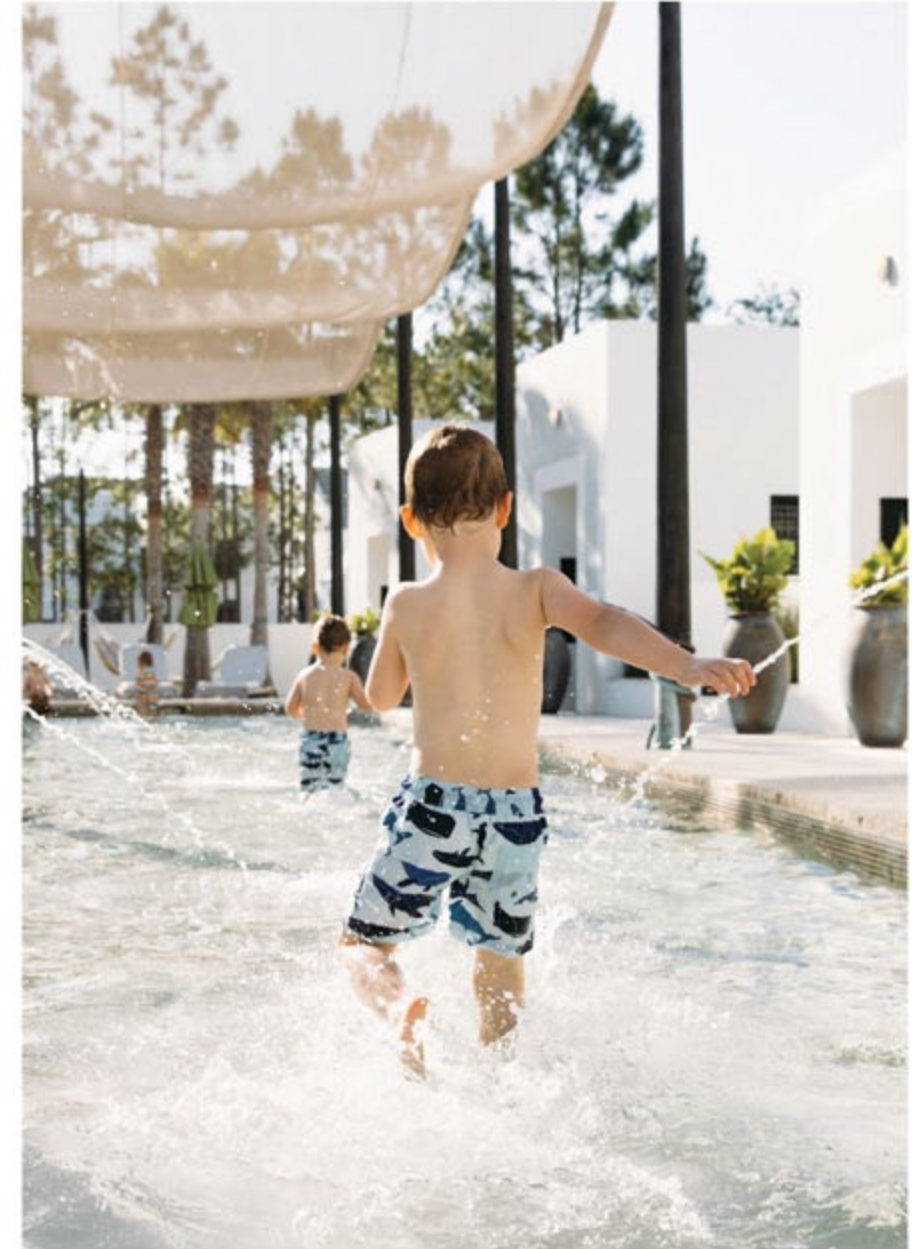
Nate Smith

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By Rachel Velasquez
Paid Advertorial

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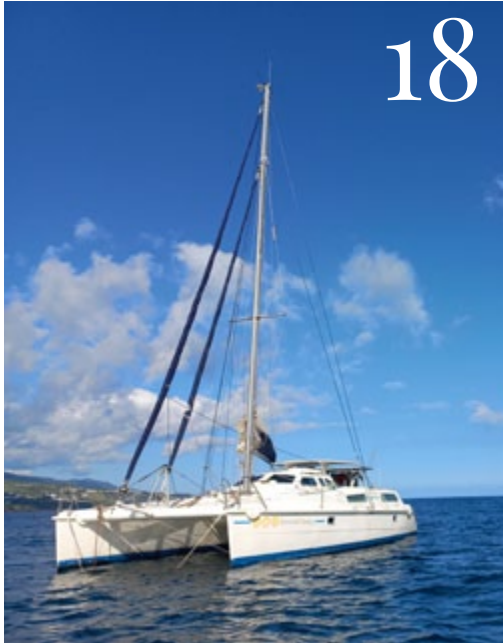
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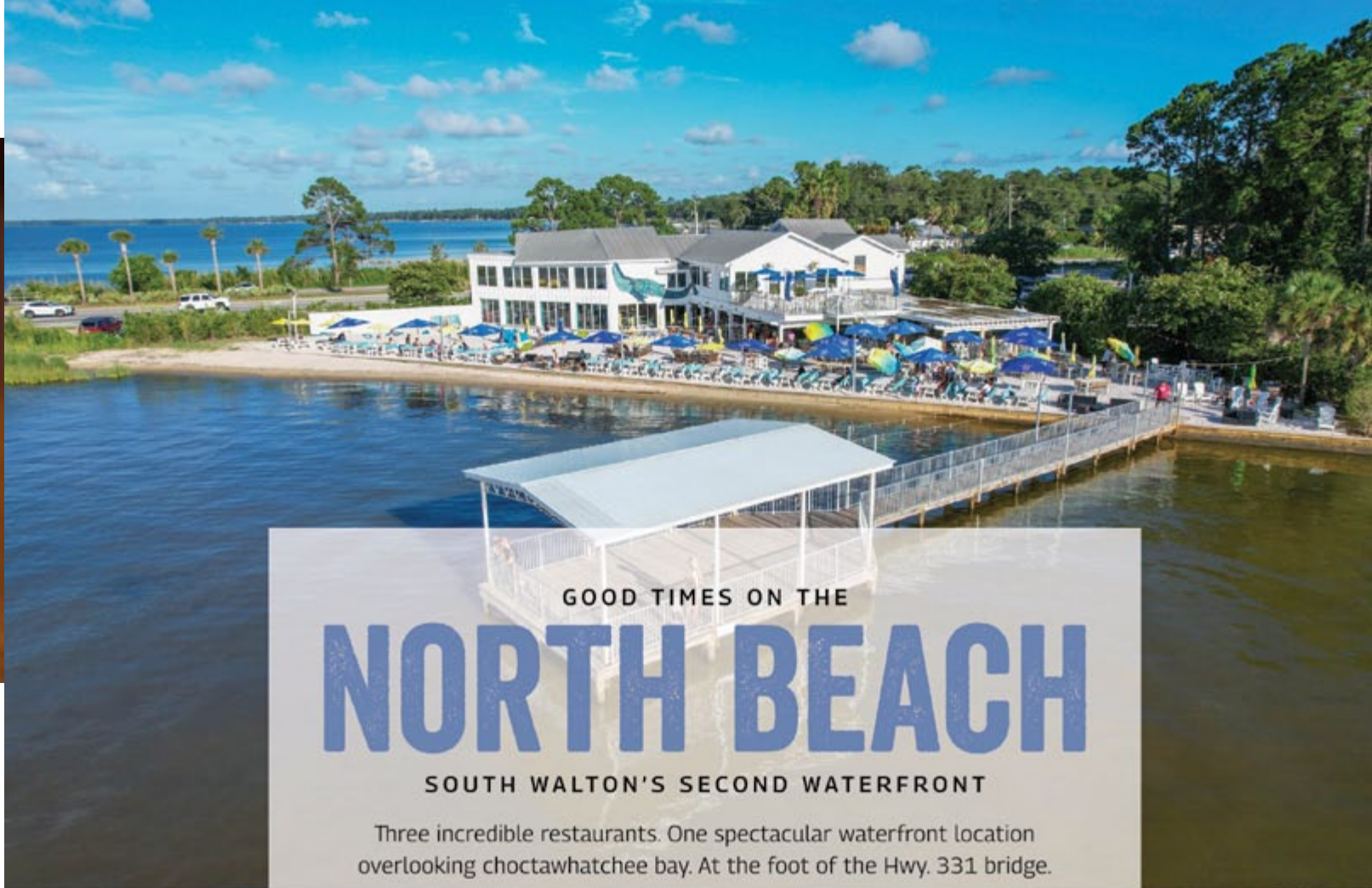
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LETTER FROM THE 30A GUY

Jimmy Buffett died today.

As one of my personal heroes, I've been scheming to get him on the cover of *Beach Happy* magazine for a long time now (although if I'm being honest, my real beach-bucket-list motive was to enjoy a sip of fine tequila with him – something his sister Lucy once told me he still enjoyed).

I first saw Jimmy in concert when I was in 11th grade. I didn't know who he was or anything about him, but my buddies Gene and Paul invited me, and the experience changed my life forever. Up until that night, I never knew I was a "beach guy." In fact, I'd only been to the coast twice. But Jimmy's music and concert culture converted another beach life believer that night.

In the decades ahead, I would see him perform many times. In college, it was announced that Jimmy Buffett would headline Bama's homecoming festivities. I had recently camped in line for two days to get Rolling Stones tickets, and since I'd seen Jimmy perform before, I didn't really feel like baking in the southern summer sun and camping on a sidewalk for two days to see him play again.

Instead, my friend Doug and I mixed up some margaritas, broke out our Buffett albums, and hit T-town in search of lost salt shakers and women to blame.

Around 3:00 AM, after devouring an embarrassing number of Krystal burgers, Doug and I decided to cruise past the local mall to see how many Parrotheads were queued up to purchase tickets. (Yes, way back when, you had to physically go to a music store to purchase concert tickets.)

There we witnessed several hundred Parrotheads partying hard and praying hard to score primo seats when tickets would finally go on sale statewide at 10:00 AM sharp.

But Doug and I had a sudden epiphany. This was the University of Alabama's big homecoming concert, and we were in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. So of course there were hundreds of students waiting in line there at 3:00 AM.

But what about other small towns? Would as many fans be waiting in line in those places?

We decided to find out. In the pre-dawn hours, we steered northeast on dark and winding country roads toward the small town of Jasper, Alabama, about an hour-and-a-half away. Around 8:00 AM, a mall cop unlocked the doors to let two hungover college kids in, along with a legion of senior citizens patiently waiting to power-walk their way around the mall's empty corridors.

Doug and I plopped down on the ground beside the caged door of Musicland, a record store that we hoped would soon be selling tickets. We sat all by ourselves, nursing much-deserved headaches and a nagging fear that we'd missed some important detail that would foil our grand scheme.

Finally, about 9:30 AM, a few people in Hawaiian shirts approached us. "Are you guys waiting in line for Jimmy Buffett tickets?"

"Yes," we replied with a sudden renewed energy. Holy shit. This might actually work. Before long, a line of ten or so people had formed behind us.

But by 9:50 AM, we had yet to see any flicker of life inside Musicland. It was dark and locked-up like Fort Knox. Employee punctuality became a rapidly growing concern among the restless Parrots. A couple of minutes later, we spotted a young woman wearing a Musicland shirt walking nonchalantly toward us, oblivious to the fact that she already had a dozen customers eager to greet her.

Now flustered by this sudden pressure, the young woman fumbled with her keys, unlocked the gate, and rolled it up into the ceiling. She flipped on a few light switches. It was now 9:56 AM. We urged her to fire-up the computer register as quickly as possible.

The computer was painfully slow. At 9:59, the screen was still booting up. I told the cashier we wanted to order eight tickets, the maximum number allowed per person. As the monitor finally flickered to life, she punched in the order. My heart was throbbing louder than my head. Suddenly, the printer spit out 8 tickets. Row 1, Seat 1 through Seat 8.

Row 1, Seat 1. I keep that ticket stub to this day, some 30 years later.

What's the moral of the story? Hell, I don't know. I'm still in a daze from today's sad news. Perhaps it's that the spontaneous laid-back approach sometimes works better than the carefully planned, try-too-hard approach. Or maybe it's just another silly story to tell.

I'll miss Jimmy's stories, as I know many of you will. I guess all I can do now is mix up some margaritas, break out a few old Buffett albums, and place any blame where it's rightfully due.

Thank you for all the memories, Jimmy. Thank you for inspiring me to move to the beach. Thank you for inspiring me to start a company that celebrates the beach, following directly in your sandy footsteps. I hope you've finally found that One Particular Harbour.

BEach Happy, my friends...

Mike Ragydale
Founder, The 30A Company



BEACH HAPPY

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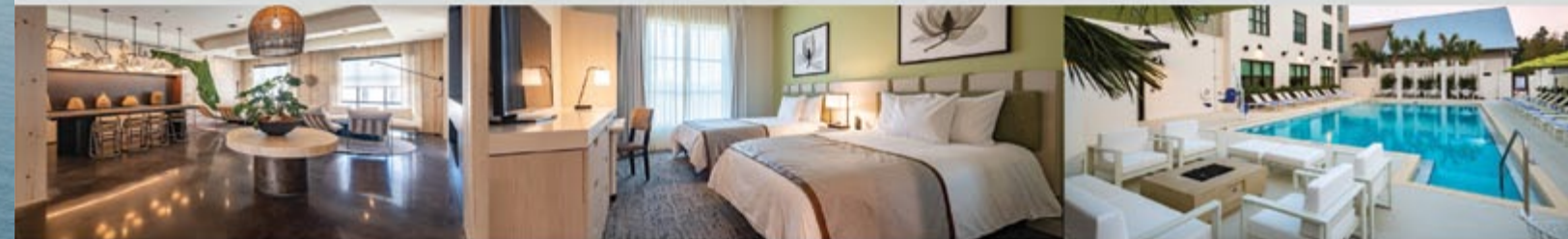
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BEACH HAPPY TEAM

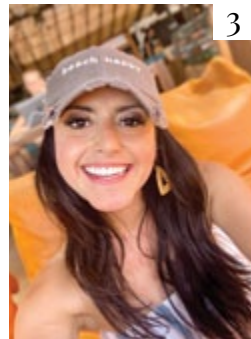


For over 12 years at The 30A Company, I've been sharing sun-kissed stories that whisk you to the shore and make each day feel like a beach vacation. My own journey has taken me from Mumbai's bustling streets to the sunny beaches of Goa and has now anchored me to the vibrant shores of Vietnam. At *Beach Happy*, we're all about finding that sweet spot between wanderlust and home, adventure and leisure. And every story, every snapshot, is an invitation for you to kick back and immerse in the essence of beach life. So, pull up a (beach) chair, dive into our latest stories, and let's celebrate life's simple, sandy joys together!

Amandeep K
Editor-in-Chief

1 Hailing from the vibrant city of New Orleans and now residing in North East Alabama, my fondest memories involve vacationing on Florida's Gulf Coast beaches. Embarking on my design journey quite some time ago, I've been privileged to work across a spectrum of genres and platforms. With time, my expertise has honed in on magazine design and publishing, encompassing topics from travel to healthcare, and from education to transportation, with several others sprinkled in between. At *Beach Happy* magazine, I channel this passion and hope to share a sunny greeting with you on the coast someday. (Featured alongside me is my beautiful wife of 22 years, Bobbi.)

David Coffey
Art Director



2 A lifelong local residing in Fort Walton Beach, I'm an Air Force brat with a loving family that includes my wife, and twins. I've witnessed the dynamic transformation of the Gulf Coast since the early 1980s. With a degree in Broadcast Journalism from Louisiana State University, I've embraced various roles within the realms of local radio, television, and advertising sales. Currently, I'm approaching my 10th year with The 30A Company as the Director of Advertising. It's an absolute delight collaborating with both local and national clients in the idyllic paradise we call 30A.

Cory Davis
Sales Director

4 I've become a master of blurring the lines between work and play, effortlessly turning beach days, boat rides, sunset cocktails, and thrilling escapades into essential to-dos. It's a balancing act that keeps me on my toes, but hey, someone's gotta do it!

McKenna Mears
Marketing Director

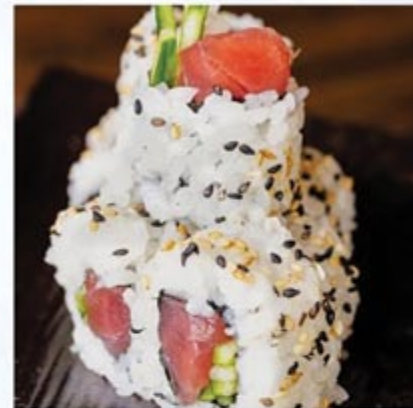
3 My role is full of purpose, balance, and fulfillment while promoting all that we have to offer. You'll find me around town with a drone in my hand, slinging our ever-popular 30A stickers, *Beach Happy* magazine, and everything in between. There's a spark within me that is ignited each and every day as I work with this incredible community. Bringing fellow beach lovers together, near and far, is what makes my role feel less like work, and more like catching up with friends all throughout the year!

Ragan Smith
Brand Ambassador

5 Raised in Italy's family advertising legacy, I ventured to New York City in the early '90s, immersing myself in the prestigious world of fashion publishing. Over three decades, I've worked as a Creative Director, with contributions to renowned magazines like *Harper's Bazaar* and *Glamour*. My narrative intertwines Old World charm with New World innovation, marked by collaborative endeavors with industry giants and a ceaseless drive for excellence.

Emiliano Neri
Designer

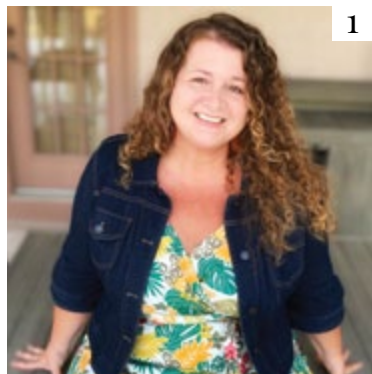
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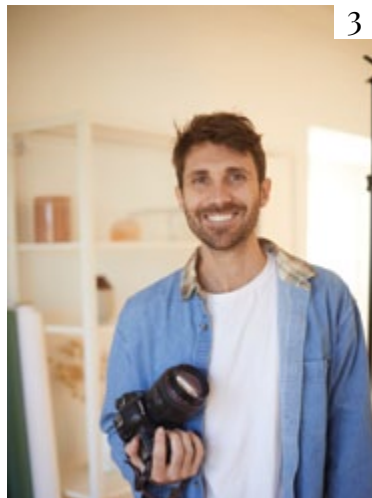
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1 CARRIE HONAKER

is a Florida-based freelance writer who is not sure where she will land next, but it will involve messy eating, a spicy Tempranillo and finding the local dive bar. Her work has been featured in *Wine Enthusiast*, *Bon Appétit*, and others. You can find her on Twitter and Instagram (@writeonhonaker).

2 MARTIN LIPTROT

is British but has lived along Scenic Highway 30A since 2004. After a global career in advertising, he made NorthWest Florida his home and runs a local PR and Marketing Agency (98RepublicPR.com). Martin's passions include soccer, cricket, rugby, Formula One and horse racing. He is a fan of craft beers and fine wines and enjoys good company and long, lazy lunches in any of the spectacular restaurants along 30A.

3 GUILLAUME LECHAT

is a French photographer who recently moved to the 30A area from Paris and fell in love with the Gulf Coast lifestyle. Check out his modern portrait photography at guillaumelechat.com and familyphotography30a.com.

4 NOAH CUSTER

a filmmaker and Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) graduate, has forged a career in the world of outdoor branding, collaborating with renowned names such as Columbia PFG, Southern Marsh, and Huckberry, capturing breathtaking visuals that seamlessly blend adventure and style. His passion for film and outdoor culture shines through his work, creating captivating narratives that inspire and immerse audiences in the beauty of nature.

5 GEN HANDLEY

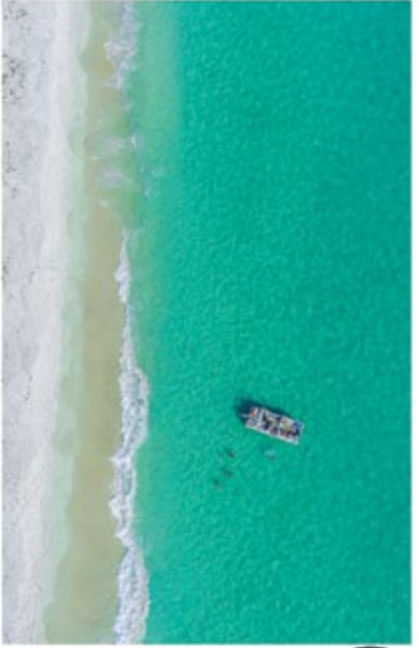
is a music writer living in Vancouver, BC, where he can be found running its wet streets or trying its many restaurants with his wife and son.

6 LAUREN SAGE REINLIE

is an award-winning freelance journalist currently living in Freeport, Florida. Her work has taken her across the South, where she has covered topics ranging from the wily ways of politicians at the Texas state capitol to the storied land of sunshine and swamp sharks (a.k.a. gators) in Florida.

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REMOTE WORK

WHAT'S IT REALLY LIKE TO LIVE (AND WORK) ON THE OPEN SEA?

By Martin Liptrot

There is something undeniably romantic about a life on the ocean waves.

The idea of relinquishing all your worldly goods and sailing off into the sunset has a certain appeal. But how realistic is it? Without a big pot of cash to cover your costs, can a nomadic life of remote work and odd jobs fund the cost of a life criss-crossing the world's oceans?

Meet Sanne Wesselman, a 38-year-old Dutch native who did exactly that, as her blog *Spend Life Traveling* (pendlifetraveling.com) recalls.

"I'd actually been saving money to do the 'sensible thing,'" Sanne told me. "I was going to buy an apartment in Valencia, the Spanish city I'd been spending much of the previous three years in. But when I started looking at apartments, something

just didn't feel right. I don't know if it was my budget, the city, or the timing, but I just couldn't find an apartment I could actually see myself living in."

So Sanne changed tack.

Rather than sink her savings into a small one- or two-bedroom apartment, she chose to buy a 23-year-old, 4-cabin catamaran with the idea of sailing from Southern Spain to the Caribbean.

With hardly any experience sailing or even owning a boat, Sanne splashed her

cash in October 2020, and then, with the help of her friend Matt, an experienced sailor and boat builder from the UK, she spent the next two months repairing and updating the sailboat to get it ship-shape for a trans-Atlantic crossing.

In January 2021, Sanne, Matt, and a friend set sail from the Canary Islands to St. Lucia. The story of their 21-day odyssey is told on her blog.

Sanne was bitten by the sailing bug, and has now spent the largest part of the last two years living, working, and sailing aboard her boat, *No-Mad*.

So, what would Sanne recommend to anyone who fancies following in her wake and starting life aboard a sailboat?

"Well, hindsight is 20/20, but there are definitely a few things I wish I knew before I jumped into this adventure quite so

naively! If you can, first rent a boat that is similar to the type you want to buy. Spend several days on the boat, ideally sailing overnight as well, to give yourself an idea of what it will be really like to live on a boat."

"And know that no matter which boat you buy, things will break," warned Sanne. "Boat parts are expensive, and YouTube is your friend to help figure out how to fix things yourself. But don't try to save money on boat parts; go for quality or you'll be back fixing the same problem again only weeks or months later. And yes, I learned that the hard way."

Sanne also explained that while living on a boat in remote places may sound like a lonely affair, the boating community is incredibly friendly.

"Don't ever hesitate to ask a neighboring boat for help and, in return, lend a hand when you see someone else who could use it," she suggested. The change from living on land to the water, is also more than just finding your sea legs.

Another advice is to slow down.

"Take your time to know your boat and to get used to this completely different lifestyle," said Sanne. "Enjoy the learning curve, take in the incredible sunsets once you're anchored somewhere beautiful, but accept there will also be sleepless nights when the weather turns bad, but that's all part of the experience."

Sanne and Matt have now traveled extensively in her sailboat and have plenty of advice about great places to visit.

She strongly recommends you start close to home, wherever that may be. After she bought her boat, she made the mistake of almost immediately sailing it halfway across the world to a small island where she knew nobody, and where she couldn't find parts for the things that had broken along the way. Even though she and her little crew managed that first voyage, it made for a tough entry into boat life.

So, once you've gotten your feet wet, metaphorically at least, where are some places to enjoy yachting and boating?

"Once you feel comfortable about your boat and you are confident in your sailing skills, the British Virgin Islands and the Bahamas are great and relatively easy sailing destinations in the Caribbean," advised Sanne. "The BVI Islands especially have a large and very friendly sailing community. In the Mediterranean, the Greek islands are always popular because they offer relatively easy, short sails between islands."

And Sanne's favorites?

"I absolutely loved Panama's San Blas islands. I'd never even heard of them before I started sailing," she revealed. "But look them up; they are gorgeous and a unique destination to explore by boat. Navigating around the shallow reefs here isn't the easiest, so get comfortable with your boat and sailing skills first, but then it's a very rewarding sailing destination."





The Bahamas also really surprised Sanne as a sailing destination. Even though she had visited before as a regular tourist, she never knew there was a whole different side to the Bahamas you really only get to see if you have access to a private boat.

“There are so many beautiful, secluded anchorages to choose from with some of the most breathtaking turquoise water you’ve ever seen,” Sanne recalled.

And what if you are thinking about traveling further afield?

If you decide to cross the Atlantic, Sanne’s advice is to take the opportunity to visit the Azores on the way. It’s another destination she’d never even considered visiting before getting a boat, but she says the islands are spectacular and the sailing community there is great.

Of course, life at sea isn’t all smooth sailing. What about the weather?

“Yeah, I’ve definitely formed a love/hate relationship with the weather,” laughed Sanne.

If there’s no wind, you can’t sail. If there’s too much wind, you can’t safely sail. If the wind shifts, you might have to change anchorage or risk dragging your anchor and end up on the rocks. She told me about the time she saw a crowded anchorage in Mexico turn into a scene of complete chaos when the wind picked up and a dozen or so boats started dragging their anchors.

“Be ready if you are out on open water. My friend Matt could tell you numerous stories about sailing in quickly deteriorating weather, including his adventures with a recent tropical storm,” she said.

Embracing life aboard a boat offers a distinct lifestyle, where adapting to varying weather conditions becomes paramount. Thoughtful preparation can mitigate many challenges. In the Caribbean, one can usually rely on the consistency of the winds, except during hurricane season, which spans from June to late November. It’s wise during these months to steer clear of the notorious hurricane belt.

Many sailors favor Curacao and Bonaire, both part of the Leeward Islands off South America’s coast, as they lie outside this hazardous zone. Conversely, in the Mediterranean, weather patterns shift rapidly. This demands regular monitoring of weather forecasts, wind intensities, potential storms, and squalls, necessitating agile adjustments to sailing plans.

And what about costs? How does living on a boat as a digital nomad really work out? Is it just a romantic dream or is it achievable?

“What it costs to live full-time on a boat is one of the most frequently asked questions,” said Sanne. “Unfortunately, there’s no short answer. It really depends on the level of comfort you want, where



you choose to sail, and what type of lifestyle you want.”

Sanne said she met a couple who crossed the Atlantic on a shoestring.

“Their 30-foot sailboat couldn’t have cost more than \$25,000 to buy, and they are now trying to spend no more than \$1,000 per month to live on the boat,” she said. “They have no indoor shower - they just jump into the ocean! They don’t have a watermaker, so they drag huge jerry cans to shore to find and stock up on fresh water whenever they make land. They never eat out, and they never use marinas because of the docking fees. That kind of frugal lifestyle can get old pretty quick.”

But then on the other hand, she’s also met people on yachts that cost well over a million who don’t blink at spending several hundred a night just on marina fees. “It’s important to be realistic about what comforts you need and base your budget on that.”

Sanne recommends asking yourself a few soul-searching questions before you make the commitment.

Will you be happy to live anchored in secluded bays and cook all your meals on the boat? Or would you prefer regular stays in marinas to have easy access to facilities and restaurants?

She also says it is vital you are realistic about the expenses involved in safely maintaining your boat. “Almost every new sailor, myself included,



underestimates what boat maintenance costs,” she advised. “Whatever you think your first year of maintenance is going to cost, double or maybe even triple that.”

Sanne runs her websites, writes her blogs, and manages her digital marketing business from her boat.

“My life as a digital nomad with a boat – even though we mainly lived ‘on anchor’ in the Caribbean, and Matt can do pretty much all the maintenance himself – is definitely more expensive than my previous digital nomad life without a boat,” she told me.

It could be cheaper, but since they sail a lot, it means more maintenance and increased running costs, and they do enjoy a certain level of comforts, so they’ve also done several upgrades to make the boat feel more like a home.

It isn’t just the financial costs you need to consider.

“Another thing many new sailors don’t take into account is the time maintenance takes, as well as all the other important boat tasks, such as checking the weather, moving anchorage, finding fuel, buying or making water... the list is incredibly long, and it all takes away from the time you can spend working,” Sanne said. “If your remote job also requires you to work a 40-hour week, your days will be very long.”

Technology is helping. Thanks to Starlink, WiFi is becoming a lot more reliable



and affordable, which makes boat life possible for more and more digital nomads.

Finally, I wonder, is there any chance we will see Sanne selling up any time soon and buying that apartment?

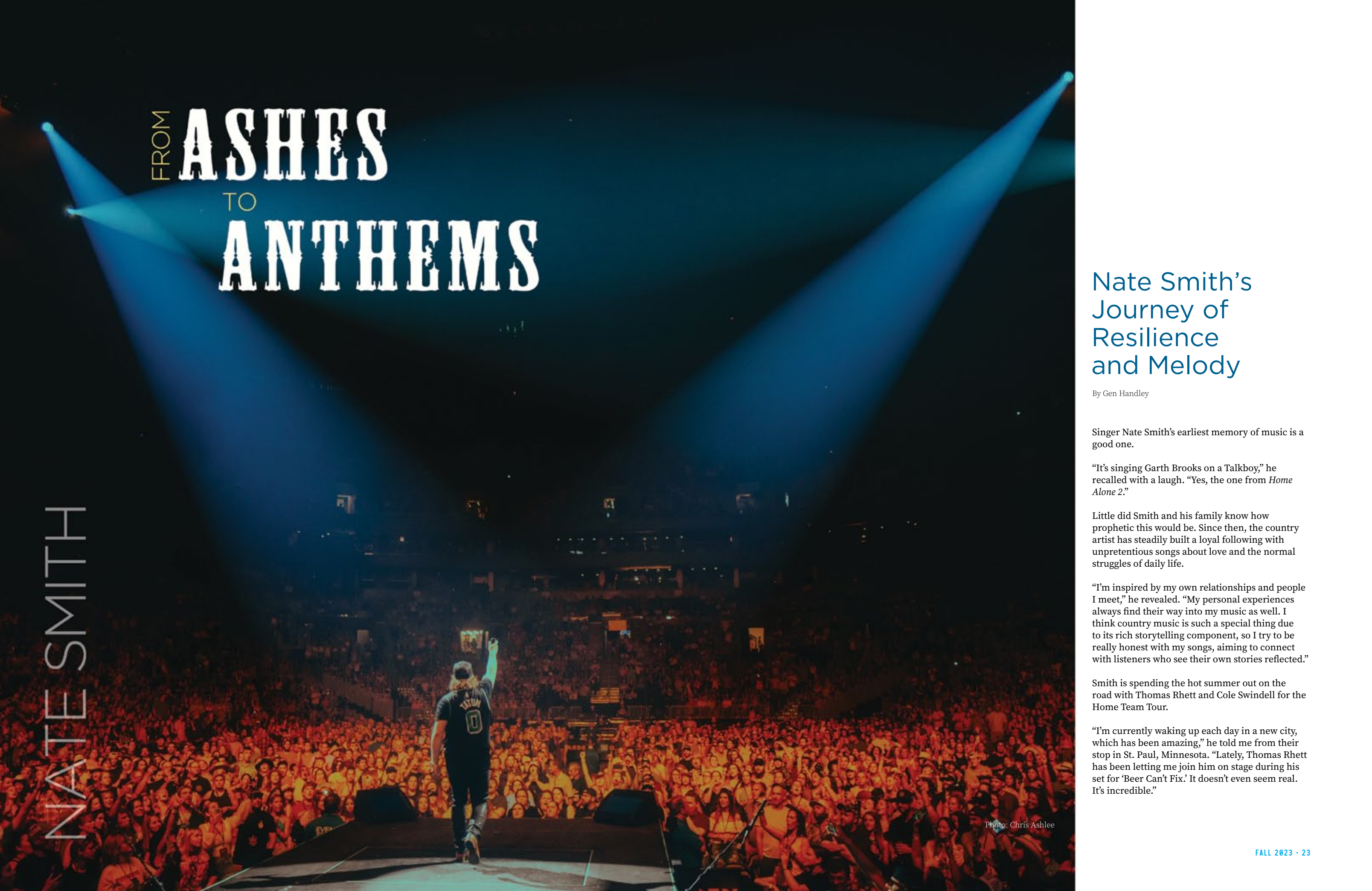
“Oh, you might!” she laughed. “A lot of boat owners contemplate selling their boats from time to time. Work on a boat never ends. The uncertainty of the weather means sleepless nights when at anchor, and constantly adjusting plans when you were just about to sail somewhere can be frustrating.”

She said sometimes, the idea of just flying from one destination to the next and staying in comfy hotels or Airbnbs appeals as an easier way to travel. “But selling the boat would also mean missing out on some unique destinations and saying goodbye to a wonderful, adventurous lifestyle.”

So, what’s next for Sanne?

“For now, we plan to sail around Spain and possibly to Morocco. But since sailing in the Mediterranean in winter isn’t that enjoyable, we are also going to use that as the perfect excuse to take a break and travel without the boat, probably to Asia, in winter. And that, for now at least,” said Sanne, “feels like the best of both worlds to me!” 🍷

[Learn more about Sanne and her experiences aboard No-Mad by visiting her blog, *spendlifetraveling.com*.](#)



FROM ASHES TO ANTHEMS

NATE SMITH

Nate Smith's Journey of Resilience and Melody

By Gen Handley

Singer Nate Smith's earliest memory of music is a good one.

"It's singing Garth Brooks on a Talkboy," he recalled with a laugh. "Yes, the one from *Home Alone 2*."

Little did Smith and his family know how prophetic this would be. Since then, the country artist has steadily built a loyal following with unpretentious songs about love and the normal struggles of daily life.

"I'm inspired by my own relationships and people I meet," he revealed. "My personal experiences always find their way into my music as well. I think country music is such a special thing due to its rich storytelling component, so I try to be really honest with my songs, aiming to connect with listeners who see their own stories reflected."

Smith is spending the hot summer out on the road with Thomas Rhett and Cole Swindell for the Home Team Tour.

"I'm currently waking up each day in a new city, which has been amazing," he told me from their stop in St. Paul, Minnesota. "Lately, Thomas Rhett has been letting me join him on stage during his set for 'Beer Can't Fix.' It doesn't even seem real. It's incredible."

Photo: Chris Ashlee



Photo: Matthew Berinato

“

**A wildfire called
Camp Fire
burned down my entire
hometown of
Paradise, California,
along with everything I owned.**

”

But only about five years ago, life was incredibly difficult. In 2018, his California home was destroyed in a wildfire. Not just any wildfire, but the deadliest and most destructive in the state's 172-year history. However, instead of dwelling on the tragedy, he wrote a song called “One of Those Days” – a breakout track that was not only therapeutic for Smith but showed the world his genuine talent for crafting a real, raw song that strikes a chord any time you hear it.

“A wildfire called Camp Fire burned down my entire hometown of Paradise, California, along with everything I owned,” he said. “I think that tragedy transformed who I am as a person in so many ways and it trickles into my music. Themes of redemption and hope are always present in my songs because of that experience.”

The attention to redemption and hope permeates his first and recent eponymously titled full-length that came out in April to glowing reviews.

“This body of work tells my stories and really shows people who I am as an artist and a person, so I felt like self-titling it was fitting,” he explained. “As my first album, it kind of

introduces who I am and what I’m all about.”

A storyteller above all else, Smith writes deeply personal lyrics that touch on universal themes of life and the personal struggle we all experience from time to time. For example, in “Dear Heart,” he describes the painful conversations he has with himself in the opening verses:

*Dear heart, we’ve got a lot of history,
From high and low and in-between.
You and me we’re disconnected,
I hate this, there I said it.*

*Dear heart, you ain’t who you used to be.
Whose fault is it, you or me,
That dropped that ball and wrecked it?
I wanna forgive and forget it.*

Smith said that when he writes a song, he might take the unconventional route of creating the track around a feeling he wants to capture and give to the listener – that and his memorable melodies and words that linger in your head long after.



Photo: Chris Ashlee

“

I just feel lucky that I get to be the messenger for these songs.

”

“The way I write songs varies,” he said. “Sometimes it starts with a title or a concept, but my favorite way to write a song is to start with the melodies and the vibes of the music. When those things are right first, I feel like I can build the song around that and expand on the overall mood and theme of the song.”

He hopes that the upbeat tone will strike a chord with his listeners.

“My goal with my music is always to spread hope and make people feel something,” the 37-year-old stated. “If I was able to reach just one person and impact them in a positive way with one of my songs, then that’s what I’m most proud of.”

“I just feel lucky that I get to be the messenger for these songs,” said Nate. “I’m not here to be cool or anything like that. It’s literally just to hit people in the heart.”

And that’s what his music accomplishes, no matter where you are or who you’re with. On the beach and by the water, Smith’s songs are the perfect accompaniment to these summer months and the light that comes with them. Even though songs like “One of Those Days” have helped him through dark periods in his life, he sees his fans as his primary responsibility.

“This album isn’t about me...it’s about reaching people with music that means something,” he said. “If it makes someone happy, gives someone hope, or helps someone through something, that’s what matters most to me at the end of the day.” 🎸

For more info, visit Nate’s website (natesmithofficial.com) and follow him on Facebook ([@natesmithcountrymusic](https://www.facebook.com/natesmithcountrymusic)) and Instagram ([@natesmith](https://www.instagram.com/natesmith)).

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Meet Gary John,
30A's New CEO & Partner

The 30A Company has announced Gary John as its new Chief Executive Officer.

"It's hard to believe, but I've been in the driver's seat for nearly 17 years," said Mike Ragsdale, Founder of The 30A Company. "I've taken the brand as far as I'm personally capable, and I couldn't be more excited to now work under Gary's new leadership."

Ragsdale will now serve as 30A's Chief Creative Officer.

Gary John is a seasoned executive who moved his family to South Walton several years ago.

"I've been searching for the best way to get deeply involved with our local community, and I can't think of a better way than helping take the 30A brand to the next level," said Gary. "We love our home, and I'm very honored to be able to help grow and elevate the 30A® and Beach Happy® brands."

Prior to becoming 30A's new CEO and Partner, Gary founded Good Influence Group, a venture development company that develops new products, brands, and business ventures with top social media influencers, best-selling music artists, and household names in professional sports.

Gary's extensive expertise in product development, brand awareness, revenue growth, audience growth, mass market reach, and omni-channel initiatives is an ideal fit for 30A's next chapter.

"I will always cherish and respect the history of the 30A brand and our beautiful community," said Gary. "We will continue to grow the 30A brand and business in the community, and work to bring the 30A brand experience to other markets and opportunities as well. It's such an iconic brand that started with a sticker. There's so much more to it now."

Gary said part of the company's mission is to share happy stories from the beach, in the hope that the company can inspire others to live the life they've imagined. "30A is a lifestyle – it's that happy place we all dream of when we need to unwind, unplug, and celebrate life," he said. "We want you to have access to this even when you're not on 30A. Mike and his team have created an extraordinary brand and business foundation. Now the fun really begins."

Reach out to Gary via email at ceo@30A.com or connect with him on Instagram (@garyjohn30A).



Photo: Sean Murphy

SMOKE

on the

WATER



By Carrie Honaker



Every smoked dip has its fanbase, but foodie Carrie Honaker reveals her top 7 picks for the smokiest, freshest dips along Florida's Panhandle.

My first taste of smoked fish dip happened in 1992 on a Sunday during my freshman year of college in Tallahassee (I grew up in Vermont). I was at Outz in Crawfordville listening to local musicians Pickin' and Grinnin' amid the sweltering swamp. Leo Lovell who owned Spring Creek Restaurant was there. We talked about fishing, evading the game wardens, and his smoked mullet dip. I've been hooked ever since.

On the slim line of Florida's Gulf Coast, from Spring Creek snaking along the Forgotten Coast to Destin, smoked fish dip is ubiquitous. Every place has its own version, and they all think their dip reigns supreme. After an odyssey of 200 miles, 10 stops, 12 tubs, and five boxes of crackers, the field narrowed. These are our favorite smoked fish dips.

Mineral Springs Seafood Market

You will drive right on by if you aren't paying attention. Only two things identify the white concrete block house set back from the road: a plume of smoke coming out of a trailer and a sign advertising, "The Place with the Dips." Old Florida oozes inside. A Loyal Order of the Mullet poster hangs alongside vintage glass fishing floats and remnants of nets. A whiteboard with today's seafood lineup sets over a case full of everything from fresh flounder to frog legs. Sitting adjacent is the holy grail: a cooler full of dips.

The Hot Mess blends smoked cobia, tuna, and salmon with little jewels of candied jalapeño pepper. It explodes with a smoky, spicy flavor. If you like a variety of fish with some heat, this is the dip. The Leftovers stood out as well—it had all the same fish but no candied jalapeño. The fish really shined without the extra spice. With every bite, another layer of flavor presented, but the hunks of smoked salmon, cobia, and tuna were always front and center. They have others that incorporate royal red shrimp, lump crab, grouper, and more (if there's gator, get it), but for straight smoked fish, Hot Mess and The Leftovers reeled me in.

1612 Coastal Hwy, Panacea
[Facebook.com/MineralSpringsSeafood](https://www.facebook.com/MineralSpringsSeafood)



Cat 5 Raw Bar & Grill

Don't be fooled by the steel storage building—a legit seafood mecca hides inside. Make your way past the cornhole and kitschy signage to the weathered stairs with pithy messages attached to the side of the building (or take the unique elevator if you dare). At the top, an expansive view of Port St. Joe awaits with plenty of picnic tables to take in a Gulf sunset. Inside, vintage oyster tongs, crab traps, old skiffs, and local art decorate the walls. Windows run the building's length telegraphing the incredible view.

Service is fast and friendly, and our smoked triple tail dip (yes, triple tail) arrived speedily. Triple tail draws comparisons to grouper and snapper from those who know the fish. It is exceptionally good for eating. An enormous scoop of dip nestles in the center of a ring of freshly made tortilla chips dusted with old bay—it looks like a really delicious flower. The classic texture blends some finely chopped fish and some hunks, and bits of green pepper. The seasoning is spot-on with not too much smoke, a little sweetness, and a kiss of old bay.

1937 County Rd 30A, Port St. Joe
[Facebook.com/Cat5RawBar](https://www.facebook.com/Cat5RawBar)





Pineapple Willy's

In the land of tourist destinations, this restaurant ranks high. The remnants of the first Panama City Beach Pier remain intact despite hurricanes, nearby fires, and barge accidents, and that piece of history offers some of the best seats on the Emerald Coast. The former county pier became Pier 99 Lounge and eventually Pineapple Willy's. But what hasn't changed is their smoked tuna dip (and the daiquiris!).

Served with seasoned tortilla chips and a cup of pickled jalapeño, this dip looks like a scoop of humble tuna fish salad. From the first taste, you know that's not the case—bits of carrot and celery provide texture, citrus brings brightness, the smoke doesn't overpower, but the thing they do best is season their food. And you can't beat that view.

9875 S Thomas Dr, Panama City Beach
pwillys.com

Tarpon Dock Seafood Market

Tubs of smoked tuna dip are snuggled into the iced case alongside glistening whole snapper, filets of tilefish, and hunks of meaty black grouper. Rolling up here on a Saturday morning, you can see boats coming in with their daily catch while hungry neighbors plow down smoked tuna dip with saltines in their cars—it's that good.

When you think of smoked fish dip, it's this version with its meaty consistency, smoky flavor, perfect seasoning, not too much mayonnaise, and flecked with celery and pepper. It's a classic, unadulterated by extras.

234 E Beach Dr, Panama City
tarpondockseafoodmarket.com



Red Bar (& Louis Louis)

After a fire destroyed the original building, the Petits, along with a dedicated group of residents, banded together to resurrect this Grayton Beach icon. Today, a version that feels just like the old one but with updates (like an improved bathroom situation) still serves the delicious comfort food the Red Bar has always been known for, and the smoked tuna dip is an ingredient in that recipe. They fire up the smoker every morning to smoke the daily catch destined for their buckets full of fish dip. The diced tomatoes, a squeeze of lemon, and seeded lavash crackers all add to the symphony of flavor that delivers an unexpected kick of spice.

Their secret ingredient? "Chipotle dressing—it's like a delicious spicy mayo situation," said co-owner Kyle Petit. If you want a break from the crowd, visit Louie Louie for the exact same smoked tuna dip but better parking.

70 Hotz Ave, Grayton Beach
theredbar.com/louis-louis-menu





Harbor Docks

The smoked tuna dip here is legendary, but it's the ice-cold AC on a 98-degree day with 100% humidity that really catches me. Harbor Docks is all about the fish from the shadow box of lures and rods to the family fishing photographs scattered around the restaurant to the extensive menu of locally-sourced seafood. The Morgans have championed local fishermen and tide-to-table restaurants for over 40 years.

On this steamy afternoon, I sidle up to the bar, sitting among locals who have been coming here for decades, and order their house-smoked yellowfin tuna dip with homemade spicy potato chips and pickles. It's been a few years, but I remember the ample portion of finely chopped smoky tuna (hickory, maybe?) blended with just the right amount of salt, pepper, and garlic, drizzled with olive oil. The chips dusted with creole spice make the best vehicle to get the delicious dip to your mouth, and don't get me started on the pickles. I placed my order. Two minutes later, I got the news: "We're out of smoked tuna dip." I can't try it again for this trip, but the memory lives on, and its greatness affords it a spot in my favorites.

538 Harbor Blvd, Destin
harbordocks.com

The Citizen

Nestled amid Alys Beach's whitewashed exteriors, The Citizen shines with its marine blue and mid-century modern brass interior. The quiet, coastal elegance radiates, and each ingredient is thoughtfully curated and plated for an elevated dining experience, including the smoked tuna dip.

The oyster-shucking show at the raw bar captures my attention as the server deftly slides the dip in front of me. Hunks of deeply smoked tuna with visible bits of bark fill the scoop—no heavy binder interrupts the texture. Crispy shallots adorn the dip, lending a crunch I didn't know I was missing. Slivers of pickled onion add acid and tang. Chef Coleman Jernigan adds, "The most important thing in our process is the slow smoking of the fish, which includes being hearth smoked with indirect heat over a mix of charcoal and oak. With our method of slow smoking, the fish stands out. The kicker though is the Hot Buttered Saltines that we serve with them. It truly is a great bite."

20 Mark Twain Lane, Alys Beach
citizenalys.com





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VENTURES

BRYNLEY JOYNER'S SWEET JOURNEY FROM BEACH BUM TO BUILDING A BIKINI BRAND

By Lauren Sage Reinlie
Photos: Noah Custer



At 25 years old, Brynley Joyner has traveled around the world — Egypt and Thailand are among the highlights — creating content for her social media brand and various products. Two years ago, freshly married, she decided to bring her husband back to settle where she grew up, roaming the beaches of Northwest Florida. It wasn't long before they found inspiration for her latest venture, Honey Swim, a line of comfortable bikinis made for both movement and style. It launched earlier this year.

Joyner lives in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, with her husband, Lukas, and their dog, Ziggy. "It's such a gem of a place to live," she said. "The beach lifestyle brings us so much joy and peace just by doing a quick ocean dunk every day and constantly being in the sunshine."



WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO START YOUR LATEST VENTURE, HONEY SWIM?

I love anything outdoors, around the ocean, and I spend the majority of my time in a swimsuit. As a content creator and influencer, I’ve worked with a ton of bikini brands, but I’ve never had a suit that I thought was 100% perfect in the way that it fit me, felt, and stayed on during underwater adventures. One night over dinner, just dreaming and talking through ideas with my best friend, Mary Margaret, and our husbands, we got to thinking about what it would look like if we created our own bikini brand.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO GO INTO BUSINESS TOGETHER?

The company consists of four owners: myself, my husband, Lukas, and our best friends, Mary Margaret and Noah Custer. We met through Instagram connections a little over a year ago and have been having beach days and fun travels together ever since. We wanted to go into business together because we all are at the beach or on the water nonstop, and we love creating content.

WHAT MAKES HONEY SWIM UNIQUE?

Honey Swim is designed to be your go-to bikini for any occasion: laying out and tanning, swimming in the ocean, surfing, jumping off a boat, you name it. Comfort, quality, and versatility are our priorities in every style we create. We want your swimsuit to help you make fun memories and feel comfortable and confident while doing it.



HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE BRAND’S NAME?

The name Honey came as an idea from a sign on the road we saw in Blue Mountain Beach near where we live. It said Tupelo Honey. When we were thinking of a name, my husband, Lukas, said it out loud, and it just seemed to click. We love the idea that honey makes everything sweeter, and it’s just a fun, lighthearted word that feels like summertime and sweet memories to us.

HOW IS BUSINESS GOING?

It’s going great. The community we’ve built around it has been incredible, and we love seeing everyone’s adventures in their Honey Swim kinis. We’ve been traveling and coming up with creative ideas for content for the past few months.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU RUN UP AGAINST?

There are definitely some challenges and roadblocks that come with starting your own brand. We are still in the beginning stages and are learning new things daily, such as quantity, effective marketing, handling customer service, and separating work and friendship. But we focus on communication, staying open-minded, and understanding that every step of the way will be a learning and growing experience with much trial and error.

WHAT IS IT LIKE WORKING WITH YOUR HUSBAND?

It’s awesome. We make a great team because I am on the creative side, dealing with all the photos, videos, and social media. Lukas does all the back-end: website design, email, and SMS marketing. We balance each other well with a good mix of creativity and logic. We do have to make sure we separate work from our relationship, take time to go on dates regularly, have “no-business talk” times, and make time for fun.



Brynley and Mary Margaret,
co-founders of Honey Swim



WHAT WAS YOUR CHILDHOOD LIKE?

I grew up traveling almost every two years until my dad retired from the Air Force in Destin, Florida. So I went to middle school and high school here. I’ve always been in love with the beach and can spend all day, every day there. I love any activity that has to do with the water: swimming, boating, diving, surfing.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE SPENDING YOUR EARLY CHILDHOOD MOVING AROUND SO OFTEN AND BEING PART OF A MILITARY FAMILY?

It was challenging at the time, always moving schools, leaving friends, and never being close to other relatives, but I am so thankful for the worldview, work ethic, and independence it has given me now. It has made me so passionate about traveling, and although my kids won’t be in a military family someday, I am excited to travel with them.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO FITNESS AND THEN DECIDE TO CREATE YOUR FITNESS APP, PWR BY BRYN?

After traveling to Thailand, Cambodia, Ecuador, and Colombia on a gap year when I was 19, I got really sick with multiple parasites. When I came back to America, I went on a full wellness journey to heal myself naturally, including nutrition and workouts to rebuild muscle and strength.

I was always an active kid growing up, but I started learning more about strength training, high-intensity interval training workouts, and proper nutrition. It’s been a journey since then. I’ve learned so much and have fallen in love with an overall healthy lifestyle.

In 2021, I created an app for my workouts to help people who needed some guidance in their own fitness journey. I wish I had

someone to follow when I was learning all on my own, but a personal trainer was very out-of-budget for me at the time. My app allows people to have guidance and a plan to follow without the cost of one-on-one sessions.

HOW DID YOU BECOME AN ENTREPRENEUR?

I had multiple small jobs growing up that I learned a lot from, and I really appreciate that part of my journey, but I always knew deep down that I wanted to work for myself and have the freedom of my own schedule. I love to travel, and I love spontaneity, so I wanted to create my own work that would give me the freedom of those things. For a while, I worked other jobs. Meanwhile, on the side, I was creating my own brands on social media with physical products to sell. Eventually, my own jobs started to earn enough to support me fully.

Having my own businesses brings me joy, fills me with purpose, keeps me busy and on my toes, fulfills my creative side, challenges me, helps me grow daily, and helps me connect with so many incredible people and opportunities. I also love knowing that the harder I work will directly impact the success of the company, and that keeps me motivated to go above and beyond.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT BEING AN INFLUENCER?

I love it. I think “influencer” has gotten a bad reputation in some people’s eyes. I have to constantly remind myself that an influencer is someone who simply influences others. With my content, I try to influence others to live a healthy lifestyle, take care of themselves and the world around them, and spread love wherever they go, rather than just influencing them to constantly buy a product. I use YouTube videos, podcast episodes, pictures, captions, and TikTok as my tools to keep spreading those messages.

The best part about my job is connecting with people in person that have been impacted positively by my content. It fills me with so much purpose and love. I feel forever grateful to have a platform that gives me that opportunity.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE PLACES YOU HAVE TRAVELED TO?

Thailand. The people are so sweet and hospitable, the adventures are awesome, and the street food is so yummy. Oahu will always have a huge place in my heart. Egypt was one of the craziest experiences, seeing the pyramids in real life. And Mallorca, an island in Spain, is one of my recent favorites.

BESIDES TRAVEL, WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

I don’t remember the last time I had spare time, to be honest. With doing social media full-time, running a few companies, and having a needy dog, I find myself busy 24/7. However, I love it this way. We’re in a busy, fun, and energetic season of our lives right now, and I feel like it won’t always be this way, so I’m trying to really soak in the fun and chaos of our lives right now.

To learn more, connect with Brynley on Instagram at @brynley.joymr. Discover her swimwear brand on Instagram at @thehoneyswim.



21

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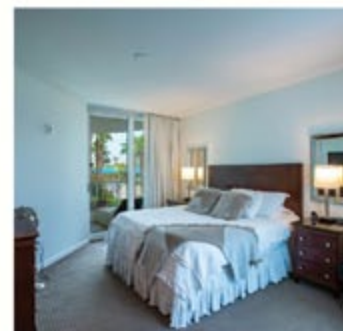
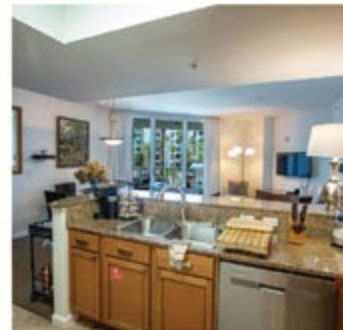
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MARGARITAVILLE

By Sean Dietrich

My first gig was at an all-you-can-eat crab leg joint, in Florida, where I'm from. I was a boy. This was shortly after the close of the Civil War.

I owned a guitar, but that was as far as my musical talent went. Even so, my uncle asked me to play my little guitar alongside him at a joint where he played on Mondays.

So one night, he drove me to the seafood joint on the beach. We rode in his beat-up Ford Ranger, with its three mismatched tires, missing windshield, no passenger door, and a little hula girl on the dashboard who was missing her grass skirt. And her coconuts.

We pulled up. This place was an authentic Florida dive bar. The real thing, such as you cannot find in Florida anymore. They served seafood, yes. But they also served beer. They even had an authentic malfunctioning neon sign which read "COLD EER."

My mother would have killed me if she'd known I was here. And I am not speaking figuratively, but worse. Metaphorically. She would have brained me with a 1611 King James Bible and buried me in my christening gown.

My uncle shut off the truck. "Welcome to heaven," he said.

"This is where we're playing?"

"Si, señor."

I asked my uncle what kinds of songs we were going to play.

He slapped my back and said, "The kind that earn tips." The he smiled. "Watch and learn, son."

joint. Sandy parking lot. Big deck, constructed of rotting wood and rusted tetanus nails. Waitresses stood outside, puffing Virginia Slims. The dumpster smelled bad enough to affect the weather.

My uncle sidled up to the bar and ordered a "cold eer." I ordered a chocolate milk.

Then, my uncle plugged in his guitar to the PA system, sat on a stool, and announced, grandly, to the joint that his nephew would be joining him tonight.

The welcoming response I received was overwhelming. Two people clapped. And one tourist woman changed her baby's soiled diaper right on the bar.



My uncle opened with "Cheeseburger in Paradise."

Applause.

Someone put a buck in our tip jar.

Next he played "Pirate Look at Forty."

More applause. Someone deposited a five the jar.

My uncle played "Come Monday." His jar was now half full.

Soon, supertime was upon the world, and sunbaked tourists flooded the bar with their sunburned bodies and raccoon-eyed faces. The floor of the old dive was soon covered in sand and flip flops, and the whole place

smelled like rancid Hawaiian Tropic and BO.

The place was packed. American tourists came from all over the nation to experience "authentic Florida" at an authentic Florida eatery, where they served authentic Florida food. Namely, authentic fresh crab and shrimp which—that very same morning—had been purchased directly from an "authentic Florida" Sam's Club Wholesale.

But here is what I remember most about that night.

At some point, my uncle played the song "Margaritaville," by Jimmy Buffet. And the place blew up. The joint came unhinged when we started singing.

I had never seen such a crowd response. People started dancing, swinging their partners, singing along with my uncle.

Children were twirling. Old men were dancing with granddaughters. An elderly woman tossed her bikini bottoms at my uncle. When the song finished, my uncle's tip jar was overflowing. Piles of cash were lying on the floor beneath the jar.

Later that night, as we walked to his dilapidated truck, my uncle counted his cash in the front seat. He split it with me, fair and square. Eighty-two.

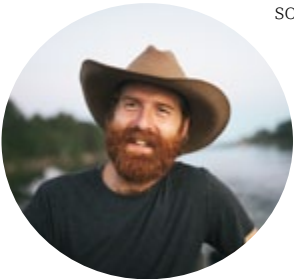
"I don't understand," I said to my uncle. "How did you earn so many tips tonight?"

"Son," he said, "you can thank Jimmy Buffet."

Which is what I'm doing right now.

God rest Jimmy's soul.

And my uncle's too.



It was your basic Florida seafood

Sean Dietrich, nicknamed Sean of the South, chronicles life in the American South. Find him online at seandietrich.com.

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Photo: Jimmy Fontaine



CROSS-COUNTRY

MUSICIAN DANIEL GERARD BRELAND TRANSFORMS TRADITION

By Gen Handley

Breland is still buzzing from a show a couple of nights ago.

The country star is on a massive tour supporting Shania Twain, and they played Madison Square Garden. Growing up in New Jersey, it's a major milestone to play this venue, but more importantly, he had friends and family in the crowd as well.

"It was a really great moment," he said. "I had a lot of family and friends in town, and it was a pretty momentous occasion. My family is full of singers, and when they're in the crowd, I'm definitely paying closer attention to how I'm singing," he added with a laugh. "But I think it energizes me more to have friends and family in the crowd because I know I got people out there who care about me, not just as an artist but as a person, and they are rooting for me on a deeper level."

It's their energy and support that has helped Breland become the musician he's always wanted to be – an artist who's challenging how one thinks about country music and musical genres in general.

"My family would perform at different churches and it was a lot of fun to watch. But growing up in our house, we definitely had to learn harmony and be able to play. We have some pretty complex musical IQs across the family," Breland said.

He would eventually leave the small community of Burlington Township for high school in New Jersey where his musical world opened up when he was exposed to different types of music he had never heard before in his gospel-rich upbringing.

In a way, the mass mix of music he dramatically experienced was a sign of things to come – a sign of the hybrid music he would eventually create, such as his 2019 hit, "My Truck," a catchy, smooth blend of country, rap, and trap melodies, rhythms, and cadence.

"It's when I really discovered my personal love for music and started to explore other genres outside of just gospel," he said. "I was the only kid in my school that didn't really know a lot of secular music. The type of music I make now, I can most closely link to that era – my time in high school – and discovering these genres and realizing some of these little threads that link all of them together."

In a short period of time, Breland has worked with some pretty impressive artists, including Keith Urban, Thomas Rhett, Mickey Guyton, Lady A, and Dierks Bentley.

With his impressive debut record *Cross Country*, Breland coined the genre of "cross country," which he created to help describe to people what he wants to achieve as an artist.

"I think early on, a lot of people were like, 'This isn't country!' And I was like, 'You're right, it's not – it's this.' That's why I came up with a more inclusive term," he explained. "But at the same time, I think music is interpretive, and they can decide what country is to them, however they want to."

And nothing is exempt. Cross country creates endless possibilities that are rooted in the genre's strong traditions of storytelling. Breland said cross country music can include "any



Photo: Evan Kaufmann

Cover Artwork: Nada Taha



music that bridges the gap between country and something else; so country and hip-hop, country and R&B, country and rock, country and dance, country and whatever.”

“For me, the thing that makes country songs what they are has nothing to do with what instruments are being used or how something is being sung,” Breland said. “It’s about how the story is told and the way the lyrics move from line to line, the color and attention to detail. All of that, I think, really shapes a country song.”

His stories are mostly influenced by personal experiences, and like many, he is energized by the summer months and the positive energy it brings.

“I grew up in New Jersey, so I grew up going to the beach. I don’t mind it a little colder though,” he said. “I’m definitely inspired by my environment and the good times that come with it.”

Occasionally, Breland is inspired by external events such as George Floyd’s death, which led him to release *Rage & Sorrow*, a pensive three-song release that was “not about politics, but more about the human experience.”

He told me near the end of our interview, “I like making music and being able to use my voice in different ways, challenging what people would expect something to sound like and taking them on a different type of journey – a journey they might not go on by themselves, but one they probably will end up enjoying.” 🎧

To learn more about Breland, visit brelandmusic.com.

Symphony of
Clouds (2017): A
mesmerizing
dance of color
and reflection at
the Cook Islands.



For the past thirty years, Frank Behrens has distinguished himself as a photographer with a special knack for encapsulating the raw beauty of coastal landscapes and beaches across the globe. His unique and thought-provoking perspectives have earned him multiple awards and placements in international publications. Behrens' passion for travel and photography, ingrained since childhood in Germany, informs his work. Now based in Singapore and Thailand since 2009, he considers himself not bound by geography but rather, a citizen of Planet Earth. Check out his work at frank-photography.com.

Photos by Frank Behrens

Wandering Eye

Frank Behrens' photo series is a captivating tribute to nature's spectacle and the human spirit, from the Cook Islands' serene beauty to the dynamic aerial yoga on Thailand's stunning shores.

Stirring Splendor:
A walk over the
secluded motus in
Aitutaki Lagoon,
so breathtaking it
moved Frank and
his wife to tears.



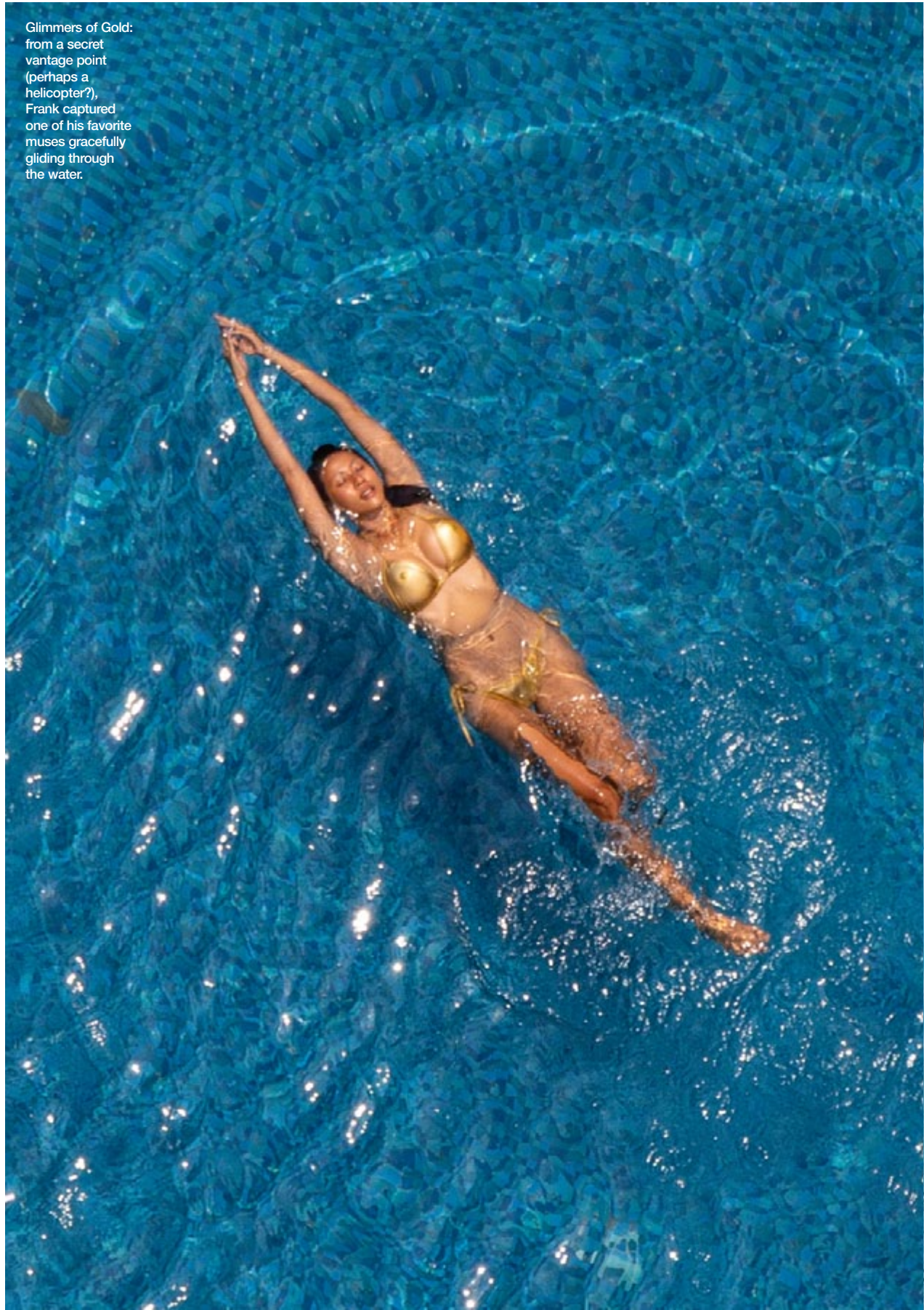


A brief sun break highlights Bondi Beach's cliffs, its glow caught amidst dark clouds. In Sydney's unpredictable weather, Frank seized a cherished moment, now featured on his business card.



Suspended in Serenity: Embracing the harmony of mind, body, and spirit amid the tranquil beaches of Thailand.

Glimmers of Gold:
from a secret
vantage point
(perhaps a
helicopter?),
Frank captured
one of his favorite
musings gracefully
gliding through
the water.



A fleeting azure
giant in Iceland -
a poignant
reminder of our
world's fragility
and the imminent
change it heralds.

An endless expanse of blue – from the sky to the beach – as the sun sets over the Cook Islands, a moment of tranquility captured right outside his bungalow.





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Butt Rubbin' at the Beach

Byron Chism Finds Freedom and Happiness Rubbin' Butts

By Martin Liptrot

Photos: Guillaume LECHAT

One life. One love. Barbecue.

A resident of Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, Byron Chism has turned what was a passion fuelled by a helpful neighbor into a world championship-winning, million-dollar business empire.

The Texas native is the founder, president, and number one cheerleader for a company making a proprietary blend of spices and flavors available in supermarkets, independent retailers, and online across the nation and beyond.

Hungry to learn more about the man, the product, and the brand, I arrived at the company's "world headquarters" in Freeport, Florida (population 6,283).

Welcome to Bad Byron's Butt Rub.

The man behind one of the nation's top-selling seasonings comes barreling out to greet me, surrounded by a pack of dogs of all shapes and sizes – pampered pooches,



“I realized how much of a regional specialty it really was, the cuisine of the South, and that made me feel special about where I am from, and about my culture.”

motley-looking mutts, and rescue dogs.

After a quick tour of the facility, and a hello with some of the team (Susan Thomason, his operations manager, was employee number one back in 1997), we head towards the offices, only pausing to look at some framed pictures that tell the story of Byron’s Butt Rub.

On one wall is a set of photographs of Byron, his team, and a bunch of what look like barbecue aficionados from back in the day. There is also a copy of his very first invoice from Cocoon’s Deli in Seagrove Beach, a local retailer who first agreed to carry Byron’s new product.

On the other wall is a whiteboard with a chart recording product sales. It stretches back to those first-ever jars and bottles and rises precipitously to today, when Byron counts Kroger, Publix, and Costco among his customers.

“Growing up in rural Texas, I liked to ride dirt bikes. But I knew I had to follow a path to work and make some money too,” recalled Byron.

“In 1991, I’d just gotten out of college. I liked the beach, I liked cooking, I liked the 30A area, and I liked that we had some high-end restaurants,” said Byron. We had the only Culinary Institute of America-trained chef in the area, so for my first three years, I was at Bud and Alley’s in Seaside working under Chef Irv Miller. Knowing I was going to get that training was another reason I came to 30A.”

Byron quickly settled in the area.

“I was looking for a townhouse to rent, and at this one, the neighbor was cooking out there, passing me food. I was like, I think I like this neighborhood!” Byron laughed.

The neighbor was Jim Norton.

“He was there from the start, always barbecuing and offering food all the time,” recalled Byron. “We really hit it off. As we got to be friends and he taught me things, I was like, I’d like to get me a BBQ cooker.”

In the days before the internet and 24-hour shipping, Byron and Jim had to go and source the parts themselves to construct the BBQ pit of his dreams.

“Most people built their own equipment back then. It was before the barbecue boom,” said Byron. “It’s so much bigger now – just like they’ve discovered 30A, they’ve discovered barbecue.”

A few years in, Byron recognized his passion and talent for cooking and aspired to improve his skills. Eager to forge a culinary career, he enrolled at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. The training was transformative, and Byron thoroughly cherished every moment of the journey.

When Byron went up to New York, he had taken with him

that barbecue cooker he and Jim had built.

“I started cooking for friends and other chefs up there, and they were going nuts over the barbecue. I realized how much of a regional specialty it really was, the cuisine of the South, and that made me feel special about where I am from and about my culture,” he said.

Byron had a deep passion for barbecue, which only grew stronger during his time in New York. However, his initial goal was to become a chef, open his own establishment, and perhaps blend his smoked meats into his signature menu.

Back in Florida, Byron went to work in various kitchens along Scenic Highway 30A.

“If I’m going to make a living cooking – I thought – I could cook all night and sell a \$3 sandwich, or take a nice piece of fresh fish and make a \$50 plate,” he said.

Back then, tourism along the Emerald Coast was seasonal, ending in September, so to survive, you had to be creative.

“In the off-season, I always say we have more time than money,” said Byron. “So I was creating my own way of doing things, making barbecue sauce, rub, and baked beans for friends, and putting them in mason jars.”

But there was something missing.

“We created the pig logo just to put on the jar. That’s when it came to life – when I put the pig on there. I was proud of my sauces and products. My friend Jim’s mother drew the pig. I wanted him to have a chef’s hat on because I’m a culinary guy, and we always cook pork butts, so I thought the bare butt was funny – a contrast between formal and informal. We called it Butt Rub – a rub for butts! What had started with personalizing the jar now looked like something you could buy in a store,” Byron said.

This was a turning point.

“I would go into grocery stores and think, every product in here was created by someone, and I have as good or better of an education in food as they do, so why not?” recalled Byron.

He felt like he could use his training to broaden his horizons into food products.

This was starting to look like a business.

Empowered by his newfound confidence, Byron assessed his strengths. Aware of his culinary training and prowess in barbecue cooking, he compared his creations to what was available in the market. Believing his products stood out, if not surpassed others, he felt inspired to venture further. Starting locally, Byron took measured steps to introduce his offerings.

With those first products being available in local delis



The making of Butt Rub - from backyard barbecues to building a business empire



Keeping BBQ traditions alive, Byron is now focused on growing his brand while savoring the sun-kissed beach life with his loyal canine companions.

“I’m free as a bird – I don’t work for anyone else... I get to go to barbecue events all over the world and when I do return home, I’m coming back to the prettiest beaches in the country.”

and retailers, the benefit of being in a resort town kicked in. People from across the region came to the beaches of 30A and sampled Byron’s products.

“They didn’t care as much about the beans and sauces, but they saw the Butt Rub, and that’s what lit them up,” said Byron.

“Everybody who visits has a friend or relative who cooks, so they bought it as a novelty. It’s a four or five-dollar purchase. They didn’t know the product, but they liked the pig and the name – they had a laugh about it,” he said.

The packaging and the brand were a great introduction; it got people’s attention. But then they used it, and they loved it too.

“I remember getting a letter from one guy who said, ‘I got it as a joke, so I decided to cook with it for a joke, but we all loved it, so I guess the joke is on us!’”

By October of 1997, Byron was getting online orders from all over the country, too much to fulfill from his kitchen table in Santa Rosa Beach, so he partnered with a commercial manufacturer back in his home state of Texas, and from there, over the next few years, he took Butt Rub to independent grocery stores and supermarket chains.

“Doors were opening and people were calling us. The stores that carried it were doing well. It felt comfortable. I had gotten a taste of not working for someone else, the freedom to make my own decisions and to call the shots. I forgot all about my chef dreams and just wanted this company to get off the ground,” said Byron.

But there was more.

“I knew it was funny and a laugh. I didn’t mind people having a good time with it, but I wanted to be taken seriously. I wanted someone to say: hey, the guy who created this is a barbecue champion, it’s the real deal. I wanted it to be credible with the grassroots here in the South because my competitors at the time were big businesses out of New Jersey and the like,” he said.

So how do you become a barbecue champion?

“I started going to competitions because that is where my customers were, sampling my product. But I thought: hey, I’m a pretty good barbecue cook, so why don’t I compete? So that’s what I did. I got my equipment and started practicing. In 1998, I started competing,” Byron said.

Byron was using the competitions as a way to promote Butt Rub. He launched his website (buttrub.com) at about the same time so people who enjoyed his barbecue could buy more.

Since those first events, Byron has now competed and

won competitions across 24 states and in 19 countries, winning national titles, grand championships, regional events, and specialty category competitions for his brisket, ribs, chicken, and of course, pork butts.

Byron’s success in barbecue competitions from 1998 to 2019 has been recognized by his peers, has seen him featured in *Food Network* TV shows, and has led to a trophy room at his Freeport world headquarters, which would put the Dallas Cowboys or the New York Yankees to shame.

Earlier this year, Byron was inducted into the American Royal Association Barbecue Hall of Fame.

So, what’s next?

“Steady growth. We’re looking to introduce a range of Butt Rub snacks and explore other licensing opportunities. We have a seafood seasoning called Jubilee and Competition BBQ Sauce, which is now on the shelves of your local Publix,” explained Byron.

After more than 25 years in the Butt Rub business, is Byron still in his happy place?

“Heck yeah, I’m free as a bird – I don’t work for anyone else. I have a great team behind me running the show and selling it, I get to go to barbecue events all over the world and when I do return home, I’m coming back to the prettiest beaches in the country,” Byron said.

Byron has also bought a property in the Tennessee Valley – the center of the region’s barbecue community – which he calls the Butt Ranch.

“We host events and fundraisers for good causes, like the local animal shelter,” explained Byron. “It’s a place where barbecue fans can come together. We host events like Brisket and Bluegrass, and it has all evolved around a love for barbecue.”

Byron finds the greatest thrill in knowing that people are out there savoring and relishing his products. This, to him, is the essence of barbecue - a celebrated tradition deeply rooted in American culture.

“I feel honored to be sharing my region’s cuisine and my culture with the world,” said Byron. “I wear a Butt Rub t-shirt most days, not because I’m pimping the product, but when I’m out at the store, people say, ‘Hey, I cook with that!’ – and I ask, ‘What do you cook? Where do you get it from?’ I love those moments. I meet the people who have put us in business, and I share samples or merchandise with them. Those are the moments I live for.”

To learn more about Byron and his brand, check out buttrub.com.



Wendy and Jean-Noel with their children Violeta and Zakary
Photo: Dawn Chapman Whitty



Current Currency

Maritime Masterpieces from Shipwrecked Treasures

When you are sitting in traffic, rushing to a meeting, or dealing with the banal and mundane matters of modern life, you can be forgiven for dreaming of a more carefree, nomadic lifestyle.

When that wanderlust takes you to sheltered bays, coral reefs, and deserted beaches, this lifestyle has an even greater romantic appeal.

Sailing their boat, the *Maryvonne*, Wendy and Jean-Noel Mignot have embraced that gypsy vibe entirely: riding the waves, living among the marine life, and teaching the ropes to their children, Violeta and Zakary.

Wendy has also incorporated the lessons of travel into her business.

“My husband, Jean-Noel, and I loved our vagabond lifestyle living on a boat,” Wendy told me. “Our family was lucky to experience a beautiful life, learning the ways of the ocean and starting this gypsy lifestyle of travels and adventure, which gave us the inspiration to create our jewelry.”

Wendy’s creations, especially her iconic leather and pearls pieces, are both timeless and stylish, suitable for casual wear at the beach or dressed up for the red carpet.

According to Wendy, pearls represent the power to heal the body, mind, and soul. “They are full of energy and remind us to be resilient and fearless.”

Wendy’s collection also includes pieces that have a history to them.

The Caribbean islands and the reefs and sand bars off the coast of South America have been the ruin of many a ship.

Spanish galleons, loaded with silver and gold from the Spanish Main, were frequent victims not just to the rocks and formidable tides of the region, but to the wants and desires of the numerous pirates, buccaneers, and corsairs who plundered these waters.

Perhaps the most famous of these shipwrecks was the *Concepcion*, lost in 1641 with an estimated 100 tons of gold and silver on board.

The *Concepcion* was the lead ship in a 21-strong fleet that floundered in a hurricane, with the loss of 300 lives. With few survivors, the exact whereabouts of the sunken treasure remained a mystery for centuries. Even when William Phipps, a New England adventurer, discovered some of the lost booty in 1687, he was unable to accurately position the find for future explorers.



The Mignots on their vessel, the *Maryvonne*.

Fast forward to the 1970s, and U.S. treasure hunter and salvage diver Burt Webber Jr. and shipwreck historian Jack Haskins teamed up and sunk their life savings into finding the missing gold and silver, with little initial luck.

Then, their fortunes changed. British researcher Peter Earles told them of a trove of papers that had been recovered from the previous attempt to find the *Concepcion*.

Buried in a stack of papers in a UK museum were the lost logs of Phipps's salvage ship. Hidden in her time-worn pages were entries that narrowed the search field dramatically, and finally, in 1978, the duo recovered a haul of coins and doubloons.

Some of those coins are featured in Wendy's Gypsy and Pirates collection.

"Being able to hold a piece of history in your hands is an amazing feeling," she said.

"We have worked with a specific coin specialist for more than two decades. He has a vast collection of unique and sought-after pieces. The *Concepcion* provided us with some

beautiful pieces. We were thrilled to be able to add that richness to our brand and collection."

Wendy said she and her family design their jewelry with adventurers, travelers, and beach lovers in mind. Stories of sunken ships, pirate gold, and long-lost treasure only add to the thrilling narrative of the collection.

"We are a family of avid travelers but live our land-based life on Florida's Emerald Coast," explained Wendy. "Our signature pearl and leather jewelry resonates with the natural beauty here on 30A. The pieces have become special, and people cherish and connect them to the memories they have created in our community. "Now, we also find that pieces incorporating treasure, special gemstones, and mixed metals are a great addition to our collection."

Spanish treasure, ancient gold, and silver coins, stories of fortunes lost and found – it all adds another chapter to the gypsy adventure Wendy and her family continue to enjoy.

To view Wendy's collection, visit her website (wendymignot.com).



Sweetening THE POT

By Carrie Honaker



The Fairmont Waterfront Hotel nurtures an apiary and an on-site honey program that offers a delicious hands-on experience for travelers while aiding in keeping populations of our greatest pollinators thriving.

Fairmont Waterfront Hotel beekeeper Julia Common at the rooftop Potager Garden



Julia and her daughter Sarah, founders of Hives for Humanity, at the Fairmont Waterfront Apiary



Ornate elevator doors open on the third floor of the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel in Vancouver, British Columbia, to breathtaking views of the harbor with the North Shore Mountains rising in the distance. I'm here to experience their "Bee & Bee" sustainability initiative, a built-in partnership with the Hives For Humanity Pollinator Corridor Project.

The pollinator hotel situated on the rooftop comes from local materials—the Haida nation donated wood for the structure; fire bricks came from Downtown Eastside (Vancouver's oldest neighborhood); urban gardens across the city provided bamboo, sticks, and plants; and volunteers wove the bumblebee nests with scavenged ivy, wool, and leaves. The rooftop garden, already a summer home for thousands of honeybees, is tended by the hotel's beekeeper, Julia Common. The third-floor terrace also serves as a habitat for hundreds of species of solitary bees (super pollinators) native to British Columbia.

Walking past the 50-foot rooftop pool, I enter a fairyland garden with impossibly tall Dr. Seuss-looking flowers reaching for the sky. Clumps of rosemary, a flood of mint, and apple trees of all varieties populate the path. Julia offers me a veil for our journey into the pollinator paradise. Dressed in a blue and red (bees' favorite colors) striped shirt, khakis, a leather belt with her hive tool hanging, and a veil, she leads me around the potager (kitchen) garden, pointing out the different species of bees.

Julia and her daughter started Hives for Humanity, a local non-profit that "creates opportunities for connection to community, through nature, bees, and the culture of the hive...on the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish Nations of the Coast Salish peoples," in 2012. The Fairmont Hotel was the first company to support their work.

Pausing by the sprouting kale, she brings me closer to the mason bees' house. They are native to Vancouver, don't sting, and pollinate the early blooms. As she delicately pulls a shelf out of the house, she relays how as a young student, she went to a bee research lab in Manitoba, and the professor gave her two hives. From the moment she first stuck her hand in the hive, she was hooked—another world that requires total concentration and deliberate movement opened up to her.

Signs interrupt shoots of Thai basil, woodland sage, and blue salvia along the path with information about wild bees, the pollination of plants, and the importance of bringing back bee habitats. The buzzing symphony provides the soundtrack as they flit from plant to plant.

When we reach the recently harvested cherry tomatoes and basil plot, Julia sets up a table with some collected lavender and sage next to one of the larger bee hotels. She lights the herbs and then loads a small bellow with the smoke that she dispels into the panels filled with 1,000 bees. Lavender-sage smoke fills the air as she reaches in bare-handed and



pulls out one of the shelves for closer inspection.

She passes me the shelf. I’ve never been this close to a working hive. The shelf feels weighty beyond its 10 pounds. In my hands, 100 bees crawl around the intricate honeycomb already built, filling in more, revealing a microcosm of life. Delicate honey streams pool in the pockets. I steal a taste of the warm liquid gold studded with bits of beeswax as Julia retrieves a piece of bee bread—a mixture of pollen and nectar that serves as the main food source for honey bee workers and larvae—for me to sample. The savory, kombucha-like fermented flavor stands in stark contrast to the sweet honey.

Meandering our way back towards the elevator, Julia leaves me with a final thought. “As cities like Vancouver develop, bees lose their habitats. To save them, plant a pollinator garden; don’t become a beekeeper.” The pandemic inspired so many urban beekeepers to build their own bee hotels on terraces and patios, but the pace of gardens has not kept up, and bees starve when pollen is scarce. The Pollinator Corridor Project seeks to remedy that in Vancouver by converting urban spaces like barren rooftops into pollen-filled meadows and gardens.

Bee suit retired, I settle into dinner at Arc Restaurant and Bar. The bounty from the potager garden figures prominently in the pollinator dinner. Nishant comes over to the table with a tray full of implements. He smokes a rosemary sprig from the garden and then builds a Flaming Rosemary Gimlet, the tastiest version of the drink I’ve ever tried.

Wayward Distillers on Vancouver Island and the Fairmont Waterfront partnered to produce a gin distilled from the rooftop honey. Most distillers use honey as a flavoring agent, but Wayward includes it as a base in the distilling process and produces this custom gin exclusively for the hotel.

Hives for Humanity candles drip their golden beeswax as the first course arrives: a delicate zucchini blossom stuffed with mozzarella and drizzled with Fairmont honey. Each course features various ingredients from the 2100-square-foot garden, like ramp pesto for the Foglie d’ulivo (pasta), black garlic honey glaze for the lamb, and spruce honey drizzled on the olive oil cake and berries dessert. As a final touch, the meal includes a donation to Hives for Humanity, and a jar of honey made onsite to take home—a sweet memento from an incredible experience.

And the Fairmont Waterfront isn’t stopping with guests, they are pollinating the future with their kid’chen program.

Solitary pollinator bees make up 90 percent of the global bee population and are responsible for the pollination of one-third of the food we eat. To help the next generation see and understand their importance, the Fairmont invites local 6th and 7th graders to come and tour the garden and apiary, help harvest honey, learn kitchen skills, and return the next evening to assist the hotel team with a gala-style dinner. The event raises funds to support extra-curricular activities for the students while the students gain valuable life skills and respect for the humble honey bee.

Bee Hotels Are the Latest Buzz in Regenerative Travel



Alila Ventana, California

Alila Ventana Big Sur’s organic garden—a space that evinces their ethos of respecting the earth and its bounty—includes an apiary filled with honeybees. Every Sunday, Tuesday, and Friday at 1:00 p.m., guests can take part in “Bees and Big Sur,” where they learn about the importance of bees and pollination. The experience is followed by a blind tasting of honey sourced from the property and around the world. Beyond the bee program, Alila Ventana irrigates with rainwater, constructs more than half its furniture from reclaimed wood from the property and surrounding area, and has an extensive property-wide recycling program. Sustainability is not just about their activities; it lives in their design.

For more information, visit [ventanabigsur.com](https://www.ventanabigsur.com).



Grand Velas Riviera Maya, Mexico

A new bee sanctuary, the Meliponario debuted in 2023 to help preserve ancient bee species and to facilitate their honey production. Every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. an eco-tour starts with a visit to the hotel’s organic orchard to learn about the pollination process and the importance of the Melipona bees. Chef Nahum Velasco leads guests through a honey tasting with samples from different parts of the country. Guests leave with a take-home bee alebrije (wood carving) and the whole experience is included with the stay.

For more information, visit [rivieramaya.grandvelas.com](https://www.rivieramaya.grandvelas.com).



Blue Palace, Greece

The Phāea Plan Bee sustainability initiative aims to raise awareness about the importance of bees to the environment by creating and maintaining apiaries and bee-friendly hotels. Blue Palace’s bee-friendly landscape is filled with pollinator gardens and abundant water sources. Guests can visit the bees in their homes, and a few times a year, they can help harvest some honey and enjoy a honey tasting with Cretan pies sprinkled with freshly harvested honey and a honey-inspired cocktail.

For more information, visit [bluepalaceresort.gr](https://www.bluepalaceresort.gr).



Mauna Kea Beach Resort, Hawaii

Mauna Kea Resort now harvests honey from on-property apiaries. Understanding the significant impact bees have on the local environment and indigenous plants, the resort established a population of honeybees to aid in pollination for local farming, flowers, and native plant production. The fresh honey gathered appears on food and beverage menus at restaurants in The Westin Hapuna Beach Resort and Mauna Kea Beach Hotel. This initiative extends their commitment to tourism that does no harm to local communities. Guests can also make leis, learn basic hula, take Hawaiian language classes, and more to connect more deeply with Hawaii’s vibrant culture and history.

For more information, visit [maunakearesort.com](https://www.maunakearesort.com).

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SAINT CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

By Martin Liptrot

Saint Croix is a tropical island in the Caribbean. It is a part of the U.S. Virgin Islands, an unincorporated U.S. territory.

The island was colonized by the Spanish, British, French, and the Danish—their legacies are reflected in the name of the island and its settlements—before the territory fell into U.S. hands in 1917.

Saint Croix is the largest of the islands in the territory with a population of 41,000, and though the capital of the U.S. Virgin Islands is Charlotte Amalie on neighboring St. Thomas, Saint Croix is nicknamed the Twin City, as the island is book-ended by Frederiksted on the southwest coast and Christiansted to the northeast.

Traversed by the trade winds, the island has multiple ecosystems for such a small geographic area. The west is lush and tropical while the east is drier and more desert-like. There are few streams and natural sources of groundwater, so many homes and buildings collect rainwater for their use.

St. Croix was once a powerhouse of the Caribbean economy, but in recent years, tourism has become the largest industry, with the island badging itself “America’s Paradise.”



WHY GO?

With its long sandy beaches, rocks, reefs, and wrecks, St. Croix is a popular destination for sun worshippers as well as snorkelers and scuba divers.

The island is ringed by a wide variety of beaches, long white-sand shores, serene coves and inlets, and tiny picture-perfect patches of sand shaded by seagrape trees and majestic palms.

Every beach on the island possesses a unique character of its own, from Buck Island, the world’s only underwater national park, to Cane Bay Beach where only a quarter of a mile from the shore, the seabed plunges to 1000 ft, making it a global snorkeling and diving destination. For those looking for something a little more glitzy, the hotel at Protestant Cay offers full-service pampering to beachgoers, and the island is home to some of the region’s favorite luxury beachfront resorts.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

Being part of a U.S. territory means U.S. citizens don’t need a passport to visit, just a driving license or other government-issued ID. Most people arrive in St. Croix by plane, either directly from the mainland to Henry E. Rohlsen Airport (code STX), or for those looking for something a little more exotic, you could descend from neighboring St. Thomas by seaplane into Christiansted’s waterfront.

Alternatively, you can take the ferry from St. Thomas to Christiansted. The trip usually lasts about 90 minutes, but it’s a good idea to check the weather conditions before traveling as it could be a bumpy and choppy ride.

Direct scheduled flights with national carriers are from Charlotte, Atlanta, and Miami, while cheap seasonal fares can be found from Fort Lauderdale with Spirit Airlines.



WHERE SHOULD I EAT?

Crucians, natives of St. Croix, will tell you that what makes their island special is the food. Because of its colonial history, it has been influenced by all those settlers from Denmark, France, Africa, and South America. In recent years, migrants from neighboring islands have brought their local delicacies to the island too.

If you like to eat as the locals do, try a Johnny Cake, a fried bread tradition, enjoyed any time of day. Crunchy on the outside, light and fluffy on the inside, this unleavened bread is kneaded and fried to a crisp golden brown. It's often served with fried chicken or with meats roasted on an open grill and is available at any of the local chicken shacks to be found on the island.

Pot fish and fungi is the unofficial island national dish, but visitors could be mistaken if they thought they were going to get a seafood and mushroom bisque. Pot fish is fried local fish—often red snapper—which is then added to a rich Creole tomato gravy. The fungi referred to here is a cornmeal porridge, more like grits or polenta, cooked with okra.



Of course, an island catering to global tourists also has a wide selection of high-end restaurants and laid-back beach bars and cafés for you to visit too.

One of the most popular eateries is Savant in Christiansted, which serves steaks, seafood, and local delicacies in plush, but not too ostentatious, surroundings.

Out in Cane Bay, Ama, a sustainable seafood restaurant, works with local farmers, fishermen, and divers to create their menu. Diners can make reservations to be seated in the natural grotto or on the deck beside the ocean, making it one of the most romantic spots on Saint Croix.

If you're looking for something even more relaxed, try The Landing Beach Bar, just steps from the turquoise waters and sugar-white sand, and order some tuna bites, a mahi-mahi sandwich, or a jerk chicken salad, all washed down with a local Leatherback Brewing Lima Picanta Ale or a classic Island Life lager.



WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

There is no dearth of places, and prices, to choose from to enjoy your stay in St. Croix. From simple B&Bs to luxury resorts, if you are looking to be in the center of the action, head towards Christiansted. For a slower, more local vibe, wind your way to Frederiksted.

There are also beach-side resorts that offer every convenience and amenity you could wish for, all just steps from the warm, clear Caribbean Sea.

The Buccaneer Beach and Golf Resort offers a classic Caribbean feel, plus eight tennis courts, three pools, an 18-hole golf course, a superb spa and three restaurants. This is a popular resort for families, couples, and keen golfers set on 340 oceanfront acres.

In Christiansted, the Sugar Apple B&B, opened as the Fancy Pink Hotel back in 1948, offers simple rooms with kitchenettes and a courtyard pool, and it is a short stroll from all the action and nightlife in the city.

A popular choice for those looking for tranquil relaxation is Cottages by the Sea on the quieter and more remote west end of the island. These cottages are a third-generation family-owned boutique complex of 28 cottages, each with an individual design, size, and décor.

The cottages sit on five acres of waterfront with private access to a clear, calm, pristine sandy beach to while away the hours and watch the spectacular Caribbean sunsets.

They are also well positioned for a day trip to Sandy Point National Wildlife refuge to learn more about turtles and sea life conservation.



Experience history and charm at Cottages by the Sea, a St. Croix legacy.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Flights to St. Croix can range from \$500 return in high season (December to April) to as little as \$100 at other times in the year. Accommodations range in price from \$350 to \$450 a night for a suite in a luxury beachfront resort to under \$100 for a self-catering room in Christiansted.

The currency is the U.S. dollar, but be prepared for sticker shock on some everyday items you are used to at home. There is no Target or Walmart “piling it high and selling it cheap,” so expect to pay extra for toiletries, sun creams, and such.

As in any tourist resort, prices for things like meals and drinks can also vary dramatically. A Caribbean beer or local rum punch drink will typically run you \$4 to \$5 in beach bars or cafés. You will of course pay more to have it delivered on a silver platter, in a frozen glass, to your pool side lounge.

Most bars and restaurants offer a happy hour, with two-for-one deals, discount drinks, and buckets of beer. Because spirits are duty-free, a bottle of Cruzan rum is around \$9, so pouring yourself a mixed drink on the balcony or patio of your lodging is a popular choice too.

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The Revivalists
Pour It Out Into the Night

Pour It Out Into the Night
The Revivalists’ sonic love
letter to New Orleans
By Gen Handley

For some, New Orleans is about the food. For others, it’s about the music. Either-or, sampling each gives you a unique insight into the legendary city and its rich culture. But what dish do you taste? Who do you listen to in order to understand what makes the Louisiana city so special? The area has produced a long list of notable artists, such as Louis Armstrong, Fats Domino, Harry Connick Jr., and the Neville Brothers. These artists established themselves as mainstream musicians over the years; however, more recently, the sound of the “Big Easy” has been captured by The Revivalists, an eight-member band that provides the groove and horns you love with some new sounds you wouldn’t necessarily expect from such a troupe.

The Revivalists’ distinct sound and latest album, *Pour It Out Into the Night*, is redefining the music from the area, showing new sonic possibilities for the vibrant New Orleans sonic palette.

“I want these songs to help people feel peace at the end of the day because we are all in this together,” explained singer and songwriter David Shaw. “We all go through things at different times in our lives. I was certainly going through some things, and I was thinking a lot about everyone going through something when I was writing.”

“I hope that the album makes people feel a nostalgic hopefulness that is rooted in living in your truth and living for who you are and what you’re about,” he added.

Initially, *Pour It Out Into the Night* feels like it is taking you down a road you’ve been before – a path where you know what’s around the bend. But as you traverse further, it becomes clear that this route has some familiar faces as well as some unexpected terrain. From the bluegrass of

“Down in the Dirt” to the beach vibes on “Wait for the Sun” to synths on “Good Old Days,” to the big pop-funk of “Only You” to uplifting gospel on “The Long Con,” this dynamic, rollicking record remains cohesive throughout, staying true to the album’s themes of gratitude and kinship with your fellow human beings.

“‘The Long Con’ is a song for the marginalized, the underrepresented, and the taken-advantage-of,” the songwriter explained. “It’s heartbreaking to see what’s happening in our country. I wanted to write a song that we could all

sing together at our concerts, and truly feel connected and aligned. It’s a song for the people.”

“Only You” is a particularly touching, haunting track in which Shaw reconciles spiritual, emotional, and physical challenges. One of the album’s best songs is easily “Don’t Look Back,” a punk-rocking track that gets the momentum going earlier on as the second track. It radiates the energy of Springsteen with strong, bluesy vocals and a gnarly sax to match.

The second-to-last song, “Say Goodbye,” feels like the

traditional end to a record, but the final song “Pour It Out Into the Night” feels like a welcome extended farewell when a conversation goes a little longer or they decide to stay for one more drink before heading home. With the sing-along choruses and catchy melodies, it’s no surprise “Kid” became a big hit as well as a fan favorite at their live shows.

No matter what genre you love most or the scene you identify with, the route you are led down on *Pour It Out Into the Night* will be satisfying in the end, leaving all uncertainty behind and uncovering an open mind down the road.



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Photo: Alysse Gafkjen



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EMERALD COAST

By Jenny Etheredge

Situated along the iconic Emerald Coast, 30A boasts some of the most pristine and picturesque beaches in the nation. This coastal highway meanders through charming beach communities, each offering a unique blend of laidback sophistication, artisanal shops, world-class dining, and outdoor recreational opportunities. Embrace the opportunity to live where others vacation and take a look at what your money can get you along Scenic Highway 30A!



\$8,995,000

208 Paradise By The Sea Boulevard - Inlet Beach
6 Bed | 6.5 Bath | 5,697 sq. ft.

Escape to your very own paradise at Paradiso, where the essence of Heaven is embodied. This extraordinary property offers a private sanctuary enveloped by gentle ocean breezes and soothing waves, with breathtaking, unobstructed views of the Gulf of Mexico from its majestic beachfront garden lot. Every aspect of this secluded retreat has been thoughtfully curated, featuring meticulously selected luxurious finishes and exquisite features sourced from vendors around the world.

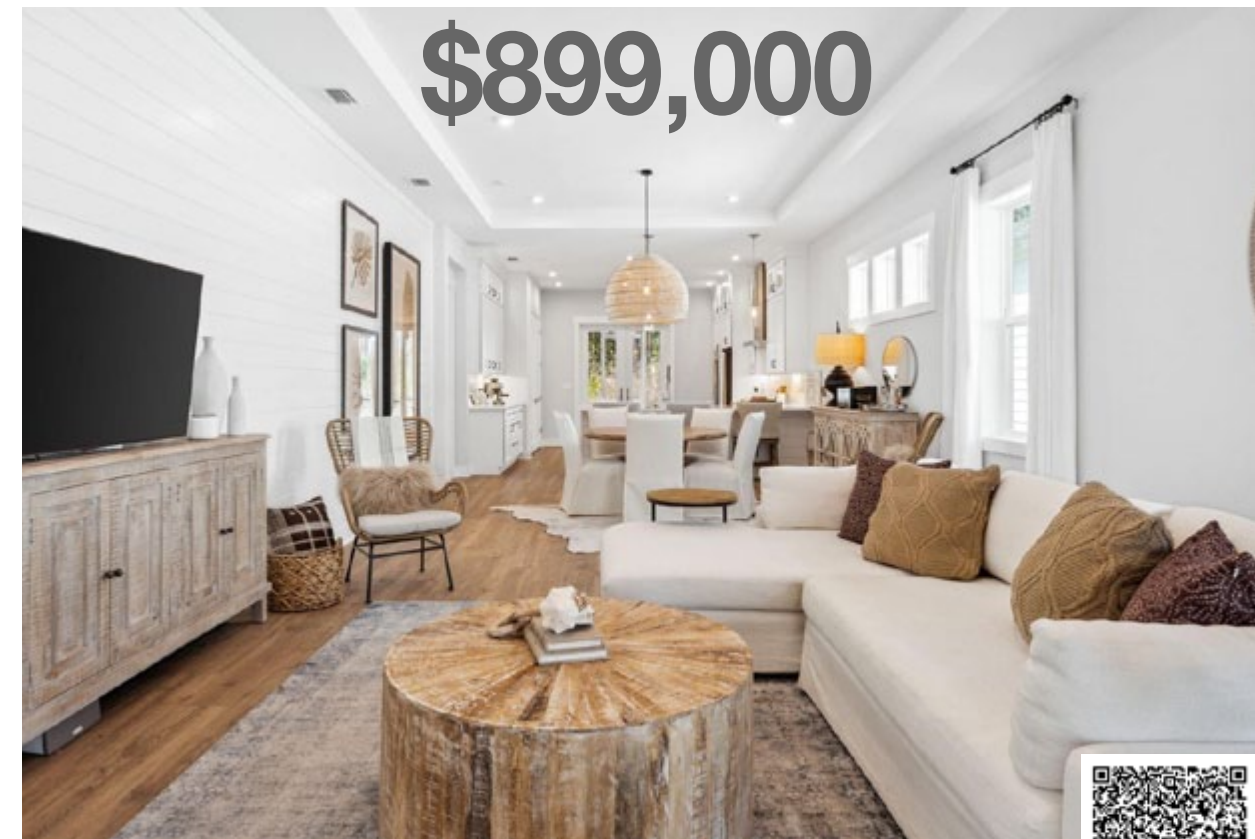




\$6,500,000

39 Sea Turtle Drive - Seagrove Beach
7 Bed | 7/2 Bath | 5,027 sq. ft.

Welcome to this gorgeously designed beach home offering panoramic views of the sugar white beaches of 30A and the emerald waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Designed with the highest quality materials and finishes, this new construction home is perfectly situated in a small gated community in the heart of Seagrove, allowing easy access to all the area has to offer.



\$899,000

92 E Lafayette Road - Naturewalk at Watersound Origins
3 Bed | 2 Bath | 1,855 sq. ft.

Treat yourself to basking in coastal elegance with this stunning, designer-furnished home in Naturewalk. Featuring numerous upgrades and high-end furnishings, this

meticulously maintained residence offers a tranquil outdoor living experience on the oversized screened lanai overlooking a vibrant nature preserve and breathtaking winter sunsets.



\$959,000



38 Sandpine Loop - Inlet Beach
4 Bed | 3 Bath | 1,934 sq. ft.

Discover the charming allure of beachside living in this fully furnished beach house located in Inlet Beach's desirable Pinewood Preserve. With elegant finishes, a stylish kitchen, and access to a community pool, this remarkable property offers the perfect blend of comfort and coastal convenience, just moments away from Rosemary Beach and the vibrant 30Avenue development.



\$2,099,000



23 Seagrove Village Drive - Seagrove
3 Bed | 2 Bath | 1,560 sq. ft.

Find all the charm of Old Seagrove impeccably updated with modern convenience at this adorable coastal cottage. A home with a history, this cottage was moved from Point Washington to Seagrove in 2007 and completely renovated, including new interior and exterior paint and a contemporary fully updated kitchen and new bathrooms. You'll find character at every turn as you enter the welcoming living spaces with shiplap walls, vaulted beamed ceilings, refinished oak floors, and designer lighting.



21 Pleasant Street - Inlet Beach
5 Bed | 3.5 Bath | 3,833 sq. ft.

The pinnacle of luxury living is nestled within the sought-after Prominence South community along Scenic 30A with the remarkable Bora Bora plan. This stunning residence features 5 bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms, and a garage complete with 2 golf carts, offering an enchanting living experience like no other.



\$2,399,000



\$1,695,000



280 Seabreeze Court - Inlet Beach
4 Bed | 3.5 Bath | 2,963 sq. ft.

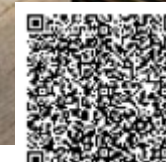
Privacy and tranquility can be found in abundance in this elegant, custom-built home nestled on a secluded cul-de-sac lot in the serene Seabreeze neighborhood of Inlet Beach. Boasting a spacious private yard with an in-ground pool, outdoor fireplace, and convenient community beach access, this residence offers a coveted retreat away from short-term rentals, ensuring a serene and peaceful living environment just moments away from the renowned 30A.



\$800,000

80 Milestone Drive Unit C - Prominence
2 Bed | 2 Bath | 1,182 sq. ft.

Discover the perfect turnkey beach retreat with strong rental potential in this immaculate 2-bed, 2-bath townhome located in Prominence on 30A. With a prime lot near community amenities and state park trails, this fully furnished residence showcases exquisite coastal design, premium finishes, and upgrades including hardwood floors, granite counters, custom cabinetry, and a spacious covered porch.





\$3,995,000



460 E Royal Fern Way - WaterColor
4 Bed | 5.5 Bath | 3,474 sq. ft.

Welcome to Sandpiper, a fully furnished luxury home meticulously designed by Dougherty Architecture + Design and recently completed in the sought-after WaterColor Crossings District. This stunning residence showcases a private heated pool, expansive porches with pool views, and an outdoor shower. This home features luxury finishes, wood ceiling details, an open kitchen, a primary suite with a spa-like ensuite bath, and a spacious media/game room.



\$1,350,000

4923 E Co Hwy 30A B103 - Seagrove
4 Bed | 3.5 Bath | 2,349 sq. ft.



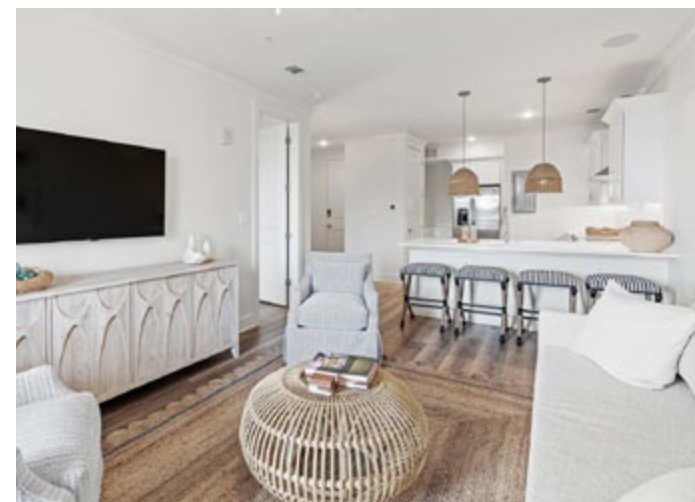
Nestled in the heart of Seagrove, this immaculate and gorgeous three-story residence offers a combination of luxury, space, and tranquility with two covered patios and a fenced back yard. Conveniently located on 30A, it gives you quick access to the beach, Eastern Lake, state park trails, dining, shopping, and more as a perfect modern retreat.



\$439,5000

179 S County Highway 393 Unit 415 - Pinewood 30A
1 Bed | 1 Bath | 785 sq. ft.

Introducing Pinewood 30A, a brand-new South Walton community, offering the perfect combination of luxury and convenience. Tucked away amongst the beautiful Point Washington State Forest and just a short bike ride to white sand beaches, this preserve-facing condominium is the ultimate getaway into the 30A lifestyle. Luxury features include quartz countertops, stainless GE energy star appliances, luxury vinyl and tile flooring, large walk-in closets with custom wood shelving, 9' ceilings, 8' solid core doors, a private screened covered porch, and more!



\$1,195,000

109 Basal Street - Watersound Origins
4 Bed | 3.5 Bath | 2,520 sq. ft.

Experience the best of single-level living with "The FICUS" floor plan by Huff Homes in the highly sought-after Watersound Origins community. With high-end finishes, a private fenced yard, and access to an array of resort-style amenities, you'll discover why this home is the perfect link to South Walton's most popular master-planned community at Watersound Origins!



30A

"What's 30A?"

30A® is the #1 Guide to Florida's Scenic Highway 30A. Every day, 30A shares Beach Happy® stories and eco-conscious products with 30A's 1.5 million followers on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter. 30A has raised \$3.2 million for coastal charities, has given away 4.5 million of its famous blue 30A stickers, and has prevented 6.5 million plastic bottles from going into our oceans and landfills through 30A's line of recycled apparel.



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THE BEACH TOWNS OF 30A

This is a map of our little beach community. Old Florida "State Road 30" once started at the Alabama state line and meandered 283 miles east across the panhandle. Several "alternate routes" (hence the "A" in 30A) offered drivers a slower scenic option, usually along the beach. But we don't think of 30A as disjointed miles of soulless asphalt. 30A® is a celebration of small town beach life – the kind that's been enjoyed by families for decades all along the Gulf Coast. 30A isn't just a line on the map. It's a lifestyle; an attitude. It's that happy place we all dream of when we need to unwind, unplug and celebrate life. – 30A.com



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