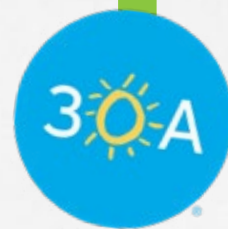


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KOLTERHOMES®

28

Features

Home Team

Shawn Johnson East & Andrew East
on Their Greatest Chapter Yet



58

Beyond the Break

Kevin Laliberte's Surf Therapy Mission
for Veterans

78

Shaken, Stirred, and Sun-Soaked

A Boozy Ode to Florida's Bars,
Legends & Lime Wedges

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SUMMER 2025 • 7

Table of Contents

Issue 21

Summer 2025



38



ASK ABOUT OUR
LIMITED-TIME
\$10,000
OPTION INCENTIVE!

THE GOOD LIFE WON'T WAIT

18
Southern Spark
Myles Morgan Rises

38
Rooftop Bars
High Vibes, Higher Views

52
Dive In
Eco-Chic Watches Making Waves

70
Redefining Seaside
How Smart Growth Is Shaping
the Town's Future

88
The Coastal Eye
Mike Fender's Intimate
Portraits of Nature

100
**Life's Short, Buy
the Beach House**
10 Dreamy 30A Homes

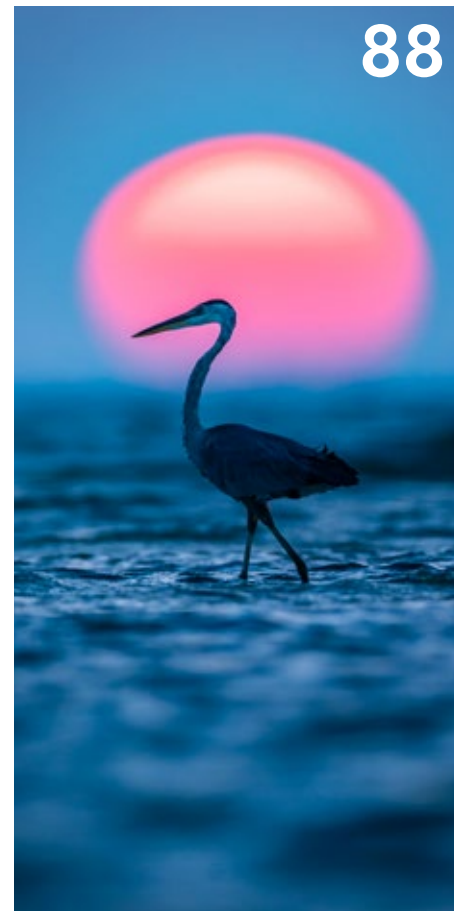
106
30A Hot Spot Awards
2025 Winners Revealed



18



70



88



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This Is the Good Part.

Summer has a way of stirring something up in us. The days stretch longer, the sunsets linger, and time starts to feel less like a schedule and more like a rhythm. Maybe it's the salt in the air, the hush of waves on the shore, or the sun casting gold across the water, but something shifts. We open up. We take stock. And somewhere between the morning coffee and the walk back from the beach, we start to wonder: What matters? What stays with us?

This issue of *Beach Happy* leans into those questions.

Our cover story follows Shawn Johnson East and Andrew East as they navigate the moments that matter most. She's an Olympic gold medallist, he's an NFL veteran, but their most treasured gold is the life they're building together. Their story isn't about the spotlight. It's about the in-between moments, the rhythms of marriage, raising kids, and choosing joy with equal parts intention and grace.

Then there's Myles Morgan, whose breakout journey through Nashville's music scene is suddenly turning heads far beyond the Gulf Coast. Originally from Orange Beach, Myles is a longtime fan of 30A—both the area and the brand. You'll even spot him wearing one of our hats in the story ahead. His sound is fresh yet familiar, shaped by salt air, open skies, and a Southern upbringing. He's not just going places, he's carrying a little piece of the coast with him.

We also meet Kevin Laliberte, a veteran who's transforming surf therapy into a lifeline for those making the tough transition out of military service. What began as a single sunset meet-up in Grayton Beach, Florida, has evolved into a deeply personal mission rooted in trust, shared hardship, and the healing power of the ocean.

If you're craving a little lift, we've rounded up rooftop bars from Seaside to Santorini, where the cocktails are cold and the sunsets stretch wide. And we take a joyfully boozy tour through Florida's wild, weird, and wonderful cocktail history, where every drink comes with a backstory.



Small choices with big impact show up in our eco-conscious watch guide—proof that you don't have to sacrifice style for stewardship.

Through the lens of photographer Mike Fender, we're invited to look more closely. His portraits of coastal wildlife are intimate, reverent, and quietly breathtaking. They remind us that nature isn't just scenery; it's something sacred, something worth slowing down for.

On the home front, we explore how Seaside, Florida, is evolving, still walkable, still thoughtful, but rising into its next chapter with smart design and fresh energy. And whether you're daydreaming or house-hunting, our curated list of 10 standout beach homes shows just how many ways there are to live beautifully along Scenic Highway 30A.

And finally, we bring you the 2025 Hot Spot Awards, voted on by locals, visitors, and longtime fans. From unforgettable meals to favorite shops, artists, and beachside hangouts, these beloved people, places, and businesses are the heartbeat of our coast, the ones that make 30A such a singular, sun-soaked gem.

Because joy doesn't always need a reason. Sometimes, it just needs a familiar rhythm—a favorite view, a slower pace, and a story worth sharing.

If there's a theme this summer, it's this: the good part is already happening. It lives in the questions we ask when we let the noise fade. It's in the stories we tell, the time we make, and the quiet clarity that comes from simply being where our feet are.

Here's to what stays with us.

Beach happy, my friends.

Mike Ragydale
Founder, The 30A Company



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BEACH HAPPY Team



JoAnn Ribaud, CEO and co-owner, has lived along 30A for more than 25 years and built her life around the coastal lifestyle she loves. With a strong background in the apparel business, she brings both style and entrepreneurial experience to the brand. JoAnn is passionate about all things outdoors—especially fly fishing, golf, and a lively game of pickleball. She lives in the area with her wife, Kajsa Larsson, and together they share a deep love for the Gulf Coast community.

JoAnn Ribaud
CEO & Co-Owner



For over 14 years at The 30A Company, I've had the privilege of crafting stories that capture the essence of beach life while celebrating the spirit of those who embrace it. My journey—from Mumbai's bustling coastline to the tranquil beaches of Goa, and now to Vietnam's vibrant shores—has deepened my love for life by the water. My greatest joy comes from weaving together narratives, visuals, and layouts, adding a touch of beauty to the world through each issue of *Beach Happy*. Whether you're landlocked or have your toes in the sand, I hope these stories bring a bit of sunshine to your day and inspire your own sunny moments by the shore.

Amandeep K
Editor-in-Chief



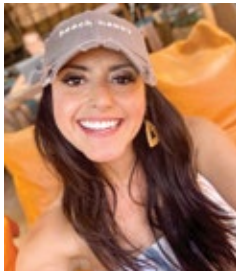
Hailing from the vibrant city of New Orleans and now residing in North East Alabama, my fondest memories involve vacationing on Florida's Gulf Coast beaches. Embarking on my design journey quite some time ago, I've been privileged to work across a spectrum of genres and platforms. With time, my expertise 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



I grew up vacationing on 30A and fell in love with the beauty and charm of this area at a young age. As the Marketing Coordinator, I wear many hats—from curating content on social media to assisting with features for *Beach Happy* magazine. My focus is creating content that captures the Beach Happy lifestyle and highlights the natural beauty of this special place. It's incredibly rewarding to share a location that means so much to me with others and show them why 30A is truly a one-of-a-kind destination!

Emma Miner
Marketing Coordinator



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



Hailing from Fort Walton Beach, I am a lifelong 30A local. As a proud 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 on-air local radio and television, and advertising sales. Now, as I celebrate over a decade with The 30A Company as Director of Advertising, it continues to be an absolute delight to collaborate with both local and national clients in the idyllic paradise we call 30A.

Cory Davis
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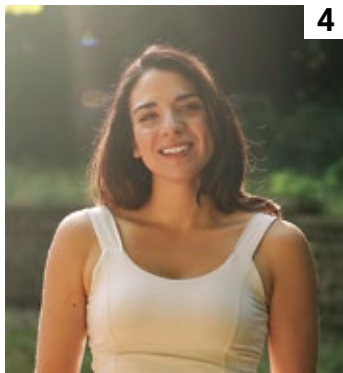
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is an Atlanta native and retired paramedic who made Florida her permanent home in 2014. She is a nationally published freelance writer and photographer specializing in night sky, storm, and lightning photography. In her spare time she can be found in the Gulf or exploring the natural world around her. You can follow her photography and writing on Instagram (@sgunnphotography) or visit her online gallery at susangunnphotography.com.

2 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).

3 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.

4 CARMEN SCHOB
is an author, essayist, and journalist. She lives in Manhattan, Kansas, with her husband and three small children. Enjoy her writing and interviews at CarmenSchober.com or @carmen_schober_writes.

5 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.

6 GEOFF NUDELMAN
is a journalist and copywriter focused on making the world a better place through compelling copy. His writing often covers the intersection of business and culture with a focus on environmental and social issues. He was inspired to contribute to *Beach Happy* following a summer 2024 drive down 30A, exploring each of the towns along the way. You can check out more of his work at geoffnuelman.com.

7 EMILIANO NERI
is a design contributor with deep roots in Italy's family advertising legacy. He ventured to New York City in the early 1990s, immersing himself in the prestigious world of fashion publishing. Over the past three decades, he has distinguished himself as a Creative Director, with contributions to iconic titles such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Glamour*. His aesthetic blends Old World refinement with New World innovation, shaped by collaborations with industry leaders and driven by an enduring commitment to creative excellence.

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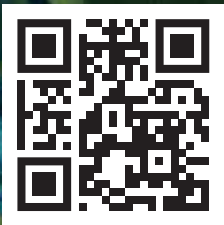


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COASTAL KID

Goes Major League

By Gen Handley



GULF COAST ARTIST **MYLES MORGAN** SIGNS WITH NASHVILLE POWERHOUSE WME

When Myles Morgan graduated from high school, his dad told him he needed to find a job before college started that September.

“I said, ‘Okay, can I play the guitar for money?’” Myles said. “And he said, ‘Well, if you can figure it out, then sure.’”

After approaching several local establishments, one finally gave him a shot, and that one-night gig snowballed into a steady stream of performances over the next few months. By the time Myles was packing for college, he was already booked to play at the legendary Flora-Bama in Perdido Key.

A lifelong baseball player, Myles felt a deeper calling for music later in life and decided to put down the bat and pick up a guitar during his senior year of high school.

“I always had more of a liking for music than most people, I think,” he said. “I just never pursued it or tried doing it because I was busy playing baseball.”



While it was a significant and difficult decision for Myles, it ultimately proved to be the right one. At 21, he’s now represented by WME, one of the world’s most prestigious talent agencies, a milestone few artists reach so early in their careers. He is now working on his yet-to-be-titled debut full-length album, which is set for release early next year. For the remainder of 2025, he plans to release one new single each month from the upcoming record.

On this particular afternoon, Myles spoke from a Nashville studio where he was recording the album with producers Clayton Collins and Dalton Wixom, the duo who also worked on his 2024 debut single, “Nobody’s Fault But Yours.”

“I love these guys and I’m so grateful to have met them,” Myles said. “I truly feel lucky to be working with them on my album.”

As for how the young singer met Collins and Wixom, that story began at a Larry Fleet concert just over a year ago. Myles had attended the show with his girlfriend, holding a poster board that said, “Can I play ‘Where I Find God’ with you?”

Although he didn’t make it on stage that night, Fleet noticed him in the crowd and pulled him aside afterward. That’s when Myles met photographer Matt Paskert, best known as Morgan Wallen’s primary photographer, who helped connect him with the producers he works with now.

When “Nobody’s Fault But Yours”

was released, the response was overwhelmingly positive, generating a strong buzz for the Birmingham native. The song is nearing 1 million streams on Spotify.

Its popularity can be attributed to Myles’ catchy vocals and chords, but more than anything, it’s the relatability of his lyrics that truly resonates. The track opens with:

*Sunsets and ocean silhouettes
Two kids full of love just figuring
out this life
Only took a couple of days before the
feelings cut through like the blade of a
sharpened knife
And we both knew that it was unlike
Anything either of us had ever felt before
I thought you knew better than to throw
it away
Leaving both of our hearts strung out
on the floor*

“That was actually about a past relationship,” Myles said, a hint of pride in his voice. “It was the first song I ever wrote.”

He has also released several other tracks, including his own take on the classic Bill Withers 1971 hit, “Ain’t No Sunshine.”

“That song was a lot of fun to play, and it’s one we’d been performing for a long time,” Myles said. “We’ve always done it a little differently and kind of put our own Southern-rock-country twist on it, so we thought it would be fun to release our version.”

**“I LOVE
30A,
AND I’M PROUD TO REP
THEM IN MY VIDEOS.”**



Scan to watch Myles rep 30A
in "Is This Seat Taken."



FOR HIM, NATURE ISN'T JUST A BACKDROP;



IT'S A WRITING PARTNER.

Myles released this new version with the help of Dominic Frost, lead guitarist for Morgan Wallen. Frost's musical instincts left a strong impression on Myles, and over time, the two developed a close artistic rapport. His contributions to the reimagined track were instrumental in shaping its fresh sound, adding both technical expertise and emotional depth that elevated the final product.

"He's such a fantastic guy—super nice, super down-to-earth—and it was an honor to be able to work with him," Myles said.

But in addition to drawing inspiration from past relationships and timeless country songs, Myles often finds his creative spark just by stepping outside. For him, nature isn't just a backdrop—it's a writing partner.

"I like to go out to my back porch, sit there and write songs—or just think about songs," he said. "'Is This Seat Taken,' my third single, was written on the back porch, so it's definitely a good place to write."

That creative spirit extends to Scenic Highway 30A on Florida's Gulf coast, where Myles has spent a good bit of his time. In the "Is This Seat Taken" video, he is seen wearing an italicized "Thirty-A" hat, as a nod to the beach community he loves.

"I love 30A, and I'm proud to rep them in my videos," said Myles, whose parents were married at 30A's Tupelo Street Pavilion twenty-three years ago. "I've spent time in the area for spring break trips, and that was a lot of fun."

Myles recently completed his sophomore year at the University of Alabama, where he's pursuing a degree in business, an intentional move designed to complement his music career. While many young artists focus solely on writing and touring, Myles sees the bigger picture. He understands that the music industry isn't just about talent; it's also about smart decision-making, contracts, branding, and longevity.

"I wanted to have a business background just in case," he said. "Especially in music."

Ultimately, though, Myles said his true drive is creating music that feels accessible to other people—songs that listeners can connect with and feel on a deeper level.

"Past experiences definitely influence my songs, but I also try to write about things that people can relate to and connect with," he said. "I want to write songs that resonate with them."

While writing and recording are deeply fulfilling, what Myles truly loves is being on stage. Performing live, feeling the crowd's reaction, and connecting with them through his songs is what fuels his passion for music the most. In April, he played his first-ever headline show—a night he describes as "so, so much fun."

"It was really cool to play for so many people," Myles said. "And to be able to play my own headline show? That was amazing."

On July 18, 2025, Myles will take the stage at Iron City, in his hometown of Birmingham—a milestone that carries personal meaning. It's the same venue where, not long ago, he stood in the crowd at a Larry Fleet concert, holding up a poster board and hoping to get noticed.

Now, he's returning, not as a fan in the audience, but as an artist on the bill.

"That will be a full-circle moment," he said. "I can't wait for that." 🎸

Myles Morgan is just getting started, and you won't want to miss what's next. Follow his journey at mylesmorganmusic.com, and keep up with him on Instagram (@mylesmorgan_music).



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HOME

Team

For Olympic Gold Medalist Shawn Johnson East and NFL Veteran Andrew East, the Biggest Win Is the One They're Living at Home

By Carmen Schober
Photos: Jessica Steddom

At first glance, their lives look like a highlight reel. A gold medal-winning gymnast. A professional football player. They've stood in stadiums, won medals, and lived in the public eye for years, but for Shawn Johnson East and Andrew East, the most meaningful victories now happen at home.

In this candid conversation, Olympic gold medalist Shawn Johnson East and former NFL player Andrew East open up about life after elite sports, falling in love, and raising a family. Today, they have three adorable kids and a booming online platform, but what makes Shawn and Andrew's journey so remarkable isn't just what they've accomplished. It's how they've grown through the transitions and who they've become in the process.

The Joy-First Approach

You'd never guess these two once lived on protein schedules and podium pressure. Behind their genuine smiles are stories of difficult changes, quiet courage, and a love that rewrote the definition of winning.

"My coach always told me to have fun," Shawn said of her early days as a gymnast. "He taught me that if the passion ever left, then it was no longer my sport." It's a surprising philosophy for someone who became an Olympic champion at just sixteen, but it's a mindset that shaped everything.

"I think we live in a culture that believes if you just push hard enough, you can force success on your kids," she added. "My story was the opposite. My coach wanted to protect my passion. And even at the Olympics, I was just a kid having fun."

Despite those humble beginnings, Shawn's rise was meteoric. At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, she won gold on the balance beam and three silver medals.

She grew up in West Des Moines, Iowa, in what she describes as a "classic blue-collar family." "My parents weren't trying to raise an Olympian," she laughed. "They'd actually beg me to skip practice to go get ice cream or shop." Instead, her love for gymnastics was entirely self-directed. "If I didn't get myself to practice, I didn't go."

That independence, encouraged by her coach and parents, built a deep well of self-motivation that carried her through elite competition.

Andrew, by contrast, grew up in a lively, athletic household in Indianapolis. His dad was a home builder who competed in Ironman races and triathlons for fun. "We were always doing something active—camping, hiking, biking. My brothers were elite athletes, too," he said. "It was normal to go climb a mountain or check out the beehives at a local orchard."

While Shawn achieved fame early, Andrew had to wait and trust the process. After playing football at Vanderbilt University, he went undrafted in 2015 but eventually signed with several NFL teams. He primarily served as a long snapper, a low-profile but high-pressure role.

"My high school coach used to say, 'Be comfortable being uncomfortable.' I didn't understand what that meant until later, when things didn't happen on my timeline," he explained.

The difference in their paths, they both agree, shaped the foundation of their relationship: patience and a shared belief in joy as fuel for resilience.

Different Roads, Same Destination

Shawn described herself as a quiet, shy perfectionist growing up. "I internalized everything. I was stubborn, and I hated messing up,"

she admitted. "I just wanted to fit in at school, but in the gym, I wanted to be the best in the world." That duality defined much of her early life, and today, she sees those same traits in her daughter.

Andrew was more go-with-the-flow, up for anything, and eager to keep up with his four siblings. Growing up in a house full of athletes taught him to be flexible and curious. "I like trying new things. I like being the tagalong."

That contrast—her seriousness and his playfulness—is what first drew them to each other.

"She made me want to be better without ever asking me to," Andrew said. "She's the most capable person I've ever met." But what impressed him most was her humility. "She could walk into a room and outwork everyone, and you'd still never know she's an Olympic champion."

Shawn lights up when she talks about Andrew's warmth. "He's so welcoming, so childlike in the best way. Nothing intimidates him. He made me feel safe to be silly and imperfect. That was brand new for me."

Andrew describes Shawn as radiant, grounded, and bold. "She's good at everything, but she's never arrogant. Watching her try new things made me want to try new things too. She has a tattoo that says 'grace with humility,' and that just sums her up."

Even now, with three kids and years of marriage, they still seem in awe of each other. There's admiration, but also a quiet comfort, the kind that comes from choosing each other again and again.

They met through Andrew's brother during the 2012 Olympics in London. "I was covering the Olympics for *The Today Show*," Shawn recalled. "At the end of our conversation, he told me I should go to Vanderbilt, and that I should meet his brother."

After one awkward first date in L.A. and nine quiet months, they reconnected in Nashville. The rest, as they say, was history.



"Sometimes, the biggest win is just being present for the little things—a good beach day, a sticky donut, a sleepy kid on your shoulder."





“I remember calling my mom after that date and saying, ‘I think this is the guy I’ll marry,’” Shawn said. It was a turning point, not just in love, but in identity.

A New Mission

After the Olympics and *Dancing with the Stars*, Shawn was still center stage in American pop culture, but something inside her had shifted.

“I think I was starting to realize that the thing I had spent my whole life doing was no longer who I was,” she said. “And that’s terrifying. Because when the noise dies down, you’re left wondering, who am I without all that?”

Letting herself step away wasn’t easy. “When you leave a sport, it’s like losing part of your identity,” she said. “I tried to fill that void instead of healing it.” That confusion surfaced as disordered eating and intense internal pressure. “It took years of healing to understand who I was beyond the gymnast.”

Andrew was going through something similar, in his own quiet way. After retiring from the NFL, he was left asking what came next. “I didn’t know what progress looked like anymore,” he said. “I didn’t know what I was good at.”

But the breakdown became a breakthrough, and uncertainty, a masterclass in self-discovery.

Searching for direction, Andrew returned to a long-dormant interest: making videos. “I loved editing back in high school,” he said. “So, I dusted off that old creative part of myself and started making YouTube videos. Eventually, I launched *Redirected*.”

What started as a podcast about major life pivots evolved into something far more personal. “I was looking for mentorship, and in the process, I started

learning the skills of content creation,” he said. “It became therapy, helping me process life after football.”

Shawn watched it unfold and eventually joined in. Their YouTube channel, once a side project, began to grow. They shared vlogs, parenting moments, marriage advice, and glimpses of real life beyond the filters. The more honest they were, the more people tuned in.

What began as Andrew’s search for direction became their shared mission: offering a refreshingly honest glimpse into the beautiful chaos of growing up and growing together.

Learning to Rebuild—Together

Working side by side wasn’t always the plan, but it became the path.

“At first, I was skeptical,” Shawn said. “Andrew was so excited about YouTube and podcasting, and I wasn’t sure I wanted to be that open, or online like that again.” But watching him rediscover a sense of joy shifted her thinking. “He lit up in a way I hadn’t seen since football.”

Working creatively as a couple took time, but once they found their rhythm, their purpose began to grow. Together, they set out to show what real love and growth truly look like.

“Couple Things” and Making Moments

Their podcast, *Couple Things*, began as a way to answer relationship questions, but quickly became what Shawn called “real-life therapy.” Rather than give advice, they share honest conversations about the work behind lasting love. “It’s not a how-to,” Shawn said. “It’s a we’re-in-this-with-you.”





“When the noise dies down, you’re left wondering, who am I without all that.”

The show reflects a bigger mission: to celebrate families as beautiful, imperfect works in progress. “Strong marriages and intentional parenting aren’t accidental,” Andrew said. “They’re built with love and often, a little mess.”

That same philosophy inspired the Moment Makers Foundation, which helps families experience defining moments together: from childcare for Olympic parents to custom experiences for families in transition. “Those little moments,” Andrew said, “they can change everything. And we want to help create more of them.”

Through their content, whether a podcast, vlog, or nonprofit event, the Easts are hoping to shift culture in one small, meaningful way.

“If we can help make strong, connected families feel aspirational again,” Shawn said, “that would be our biggest win.”

Family First, Always

If their twenties were about pushing forward, into elite sports, into marriage, into the wild world of digital media, then their thirties have been about slowing down, settling in, and savoring what matters most: family.

Now parents to three young children, this is their most demanding and rewarding chapter yet. “Everything else we’ve done—Olympics, NFL, *Dancing with the Stars*, even building our brand—none of it compares to this,” Shawn said. “Raising kids is the hardest and the best thing I’ve ever done.”

Their parenting style mirrors their broader values: grounded in faith, guided by humor, and laced with humility. Faith, they say, anchors everything.

“Kids make it simple,” Shawn said. “They don’t overthink. If something’s confusing, they say, ‘It’s in God’s hands.’ That childlike faith has strengthened my own.”

“Faith is a daily choice, like choosing to love your spouse. It’s about trust, hope, and knowing someone greater is orchestrating it all,” Andrew added.

They hope their story makes other families feel seen, not because they have it all figured out, but because they’re committed to the process.

“If we can make someone want to be a great parent the way they want a six-pack or a million-dollar brand,” Andrew said, “that’s the win.”

Why 30A Feels Like Home

That sense of peace is part of what keeps drawing them back to Florida’s Scenic Highway 30A, a coastal haven where life slows down and the moments that matter most come into focus.

“It’s so family friendly,” Shawn said. “You see generations walking together, kids on bikes, people slowing down. It’s beautiful.”

Andrew first visited in 2007 on a family camping trip. Now, it’s where they go to reconnect with each other and with their kids.

“We ride bikes to the shops. We go to George’s at Alys Beach. We grab sourdough at Black Bear Bread Co. There’s this smoothie place we love, but we never remember the name,” he said, laughing.

They’ve stayed with friends, visited state parks, and boogie boarded along the Gulf. “It’s easy to get to, beautiful, and full of good food and good people,” Andrew added.

30A is part of their rhythm now—a place to slow down, remember what matters, and savor how far they’ve come. For Shawn and Andrew, happiness isn’t just a feeling. It’s a choice—and a journey.

“Sometimes,” Andrew said, “the biggest win is just being present for the little things—a good beach day, a sticky donut, a sleepy kid on your shoulder. That’s the gold medal now.” 🏆

Catch behind-the-scenes moments, honest conversations, and a refreshingly real take on family life. Follow Shawn (@shawnjohnson) and Andrew (@andrewdeast) on Instagram. Tune in to their podcast Couple Things on YouTube (@shawnandandrewpods).



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Sky High Sips

By Carrie Honaker

Nine Rooftop Bars Where Sunsets Meet Unforgettable Sips

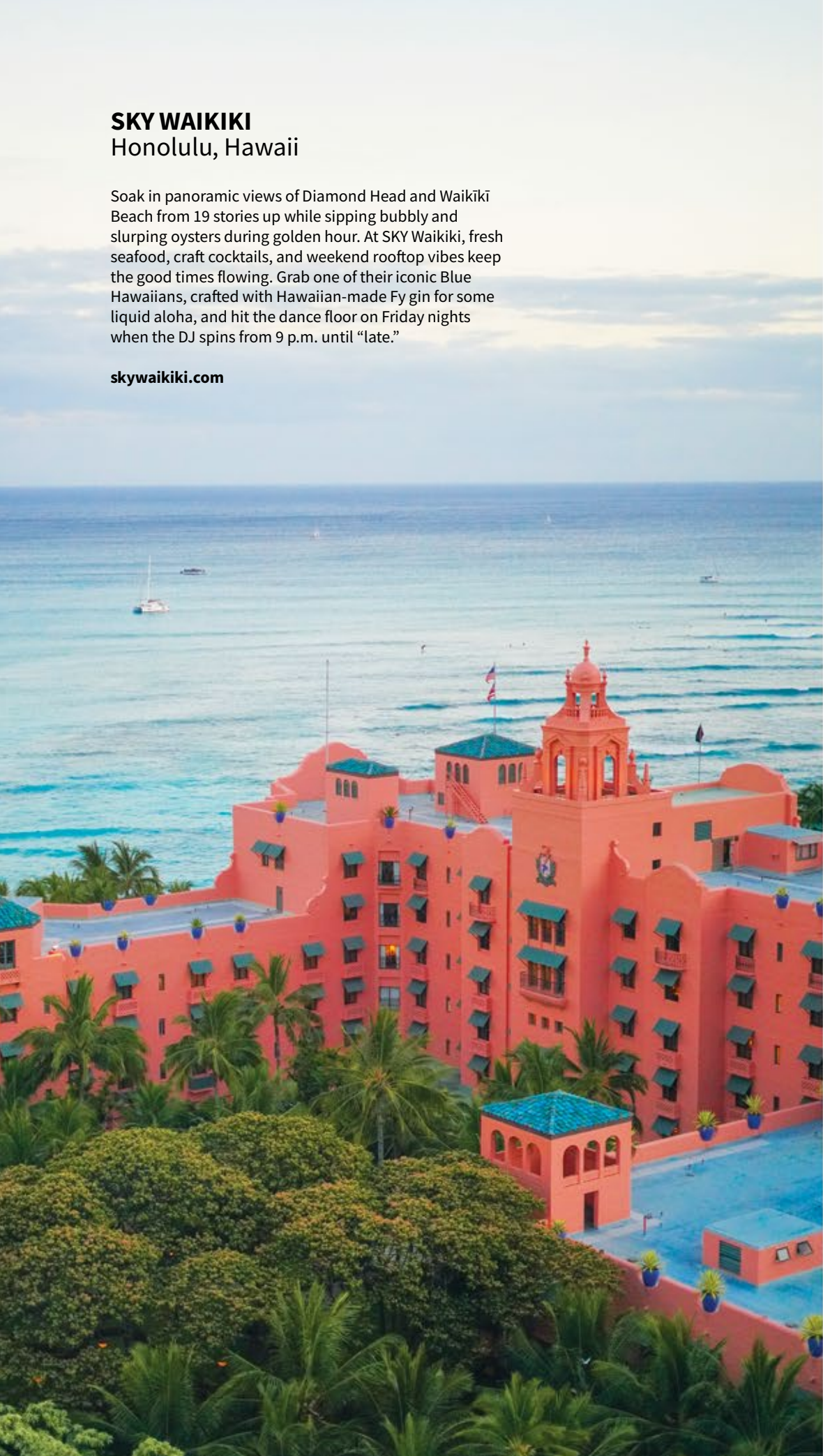
What's better than a beachside cocktail? How about sipping one from a rooftop with the sea breeze in your hair and the sun sliding into the horizon? Whether you're hopping over to the Bahamas, chasing sunsets in Thailand or sipping spritzes in Greece, these nine spots deliver that beach happy magic. Cheers to golden-hour views, one rooftop at a time.

BABA NEST, Phuket, Thailand

SKY WAIKIKI
Honolulu, Hawaii

Soak in panoramic views of Diamond Head and Waikiki Beach from 19 stories up while sipping bubbly and slurping oysters during golden hour. At SKY Waikiki, fresh seafood, craft cocktails, and weekend rooftop vibes keep the good times flowing. Grab one of their iconic Blue Hawaiians, crafted with Hawaiian-made Fy gin for some liquid aloha, and hit the dance floor on Friday nights when the DJ spins from 9 p.m. until “late.”

skywaikiki.com



CHINCHILLA
Cape Town, South Africa

There's a reason Cape Town is always on the best-sunset lists, and Chinchilla might just have the best seat in the house. Overlooking the golden stretch of Camps Bay Beach, this rooftop stunner delivers effortless beachside sophistication. Sushi, seafood platters, curated wines, and DJs spinning laidback summer beats—it's your front-row ticket to Africa's Atlantic sunset, served with a chilled glass of Cape Town's finest.

kovecollection.co.za/chinchilla





BABA NEST
Phuket, Thailand

Baba Nest is the kind of place that lingers in your memory long after your tan fades. Floating above the Andaman Sea on a platform surrounded by a mirror-like infinity pool, this ultra-exclusive rooftop bar at Sri Panwa Resort is a sunset lover's dream. Seating is limited, so reservations are a must—but trust us, the panoramic views (and the signature cocktails) are well worth the effort.

babaphuket.com



SUNSET LOUNGE AT SONESTA
Maho Village Maho Bay, Sint Maarten

Perched at the edge of the Caribbean, Sunset Lounge overlooks dreamy Maho Bay and offers front-row seats to the island's famous low-flying planes. Sip a daiquiri as planes dip low and the sky turns tangerine and coral with the setting sun.

sonestastmaarten.com



LURE BAR AT MYSTIQUE SANTORINI
Oia, Greece

Santorini might just be the queen of sunsets, and Lure Bar is her crown jewel. Perched on the island's caldera cliffs, this rooftop bar blends wellness and indulgence in one beautiful glass. Think low-alcohol botanical cocktails, a Negroni bar with seasonal twists, and local wines that taste like the volcano itself. Add soft earth tones, organic curves, and the best view in the Aegean, and you've got yourself a Mediterranean sunset you'll never forget.

mystique.gr

**ROOFTOP 360 AT CORAZÓN
CABO RESORT & SPA**
Cabo San Lucas, Mexico

Cabo's beach scene is already legendary, but Rooftop 360 takes the party to new heights. As the highest rooftop bar in town, it serves up panoramic views of the Sea of Cortez, Land's End, and Cabo's bustling marina. Start your day with rooftop yoga at sunrise, then lounge in the infinity pool, or sip cocktails under twinkle lights as the city glows below.

corazoncabo.com



THE SPRITZERIA AT DOMES AULŪS ELOUNDA Crete, Greece

Dreaming of Greece? Elounda's got a little secret: The Spritzeria, a breezy rooftop bar at Domes Aulūs Elounda, where every cocktail comes with a postcard-worthy view of the Cretan Sea and Spinalonga Island. With playful spritzes, live DJ sets, and a sparkling crowd of sun-chasers, it's the perfect place to toast the good life under the stars. Bring your sandals, your summer crush, and a taste for something cool and fizzy.

domesresorts.com/domesauluselounda



ARDO ROOFTOP Townsville, Queensland

Australia does beaches right, and Ardo Rooftop adds a splash of sky-high glam to the coast of North Queensland. With 180-degree views over the Coral Sea and Magnetic Island, this is the spot to kick back with a mango cocktail (try the Mango Dreamer!) and watch the world turn golden. Saturdays mean live DJs, but every day delivers sun-soaked lounging, killer tapas, and cocktails crafted by one of the region's top mixologists. It's beachside bliss with an extra twist of elegance.

ardohotel.au





SKYBAR AT SLS BAHAMAR
New Providence, Bahamas

The Bahamas are all about breezy island vibes, and Skybar takes it up a notch—literally and luxuriously. Perched above the stylish SLS Baha Mar, this open-air rooftop lounge is wrapped in ivy and drenched in sunshine. By day, it's a peaceful little paradise to sip fresh cocktails and feel the sea breeze. But when the sun dips below the turquoise water, Skybar shifts gears—think DJ sets, sultry lighting, and the kind of energy that keeps the night going long after your second mojito.

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By Geoff Nudelman

5

OCEAN-FRIENDLY WATCHES THAT MARRY STYLE WITH MARINE STEWARDSHIP

The venerable wristwatch has long shared a deep connection with the ocean. Dive watches, in particular, remain among the most popular watch styles, and many brands utilize this design aesthetic to signal their support for marine conservation and ocean awareness efforts.

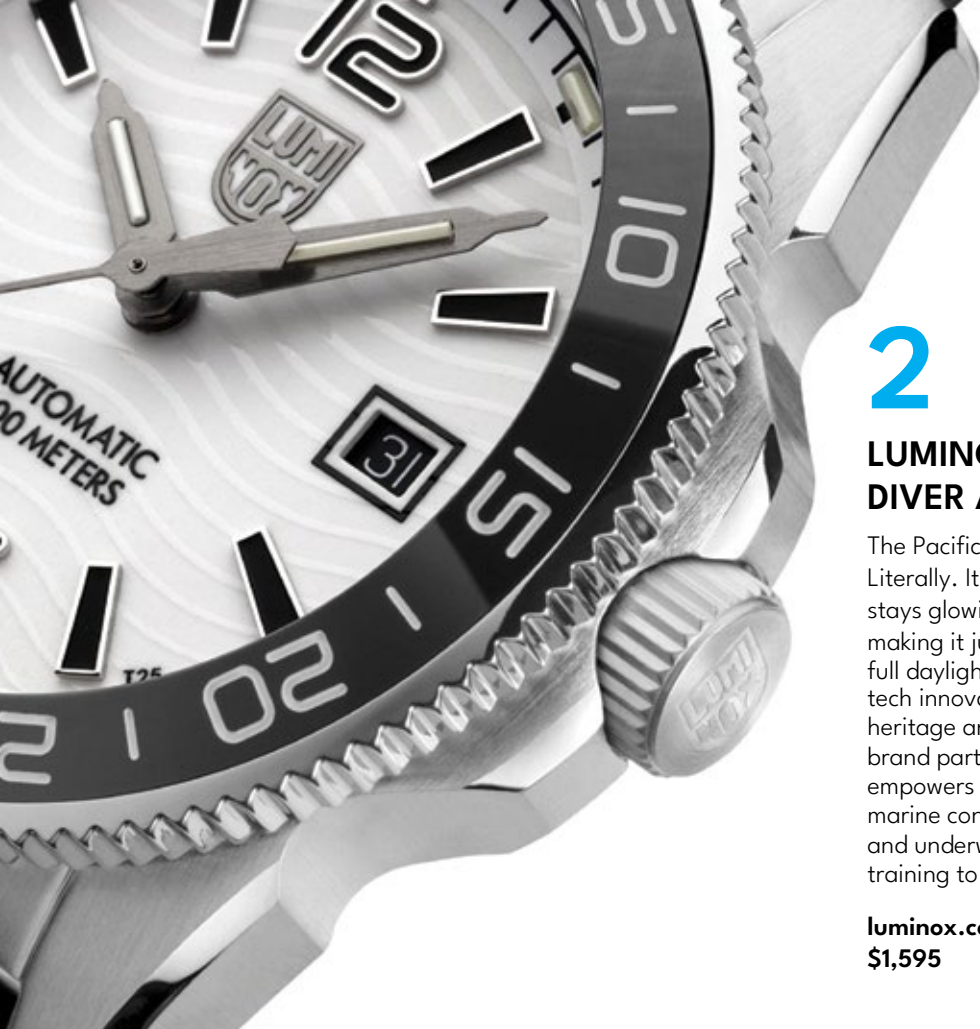
Here are five watches that let you show your support for the ocean, and do it in serious style:

1 VAER C5 TACTICAL FIELD SOLAR

Vaer's C5 is a true tool watch: rugged, reliable, and ready for everyday wear. Available in quartz, solar-powered (shown here), and automatic versions, the C5 offers multiple strap options, including a waterproof band for ocean adventures. A proud 1% for the Planet member, Vaer goes even further by designing long-lasting, repairable timepieces built to withstand the elements. At its core, the brand celebrates the spirit of water-bound exploration, from paddleboarding to open-water dives.

vaerwatches.com
\$385



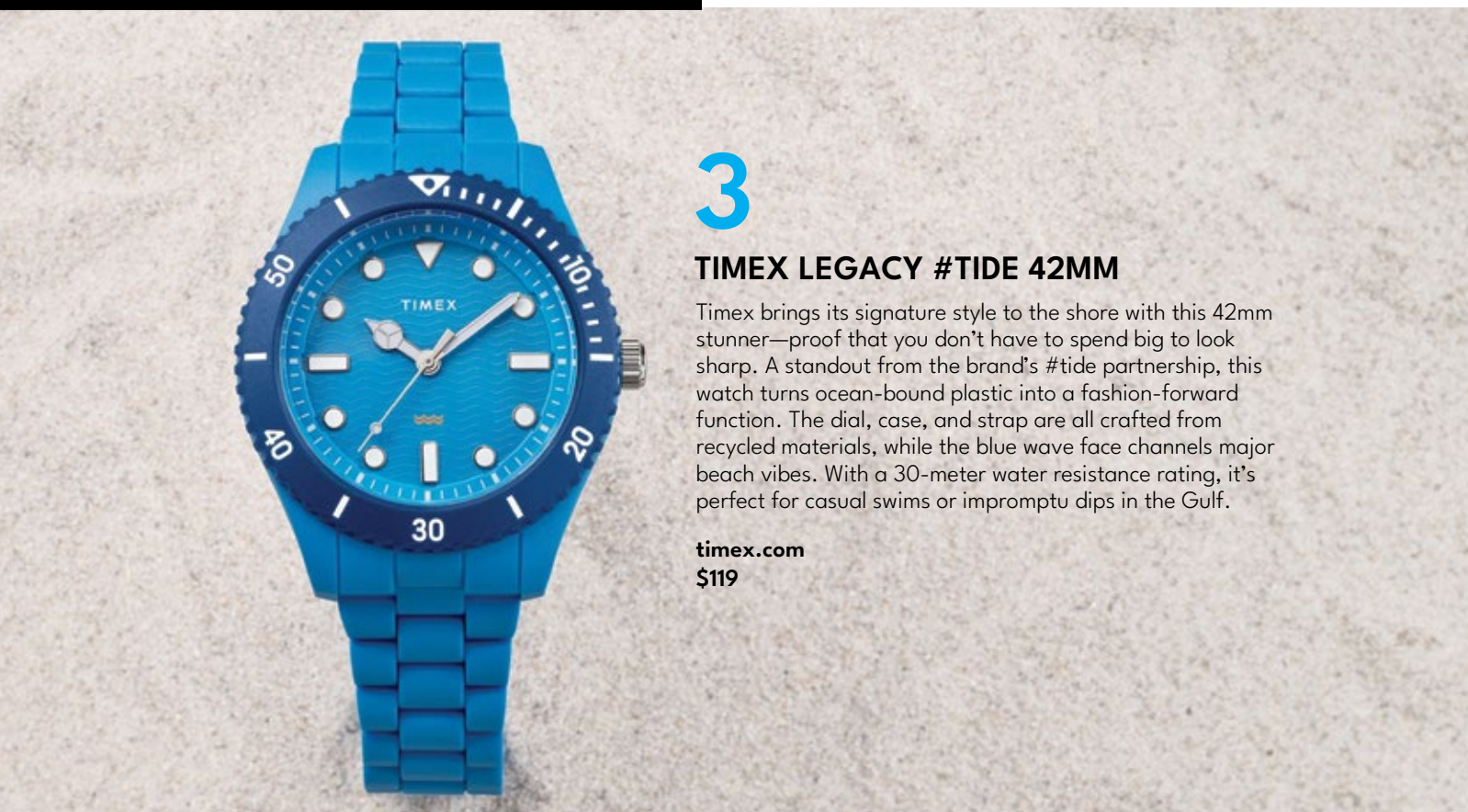


2

LUMINOX PACIFIC DIVER AUTOMATIC

The Pacific Diver is built to shine. Literally. Its self-powered illumination stays glowing for up to 25 years, making it just as visible in pitch darkness as it is in full daylight. This model marks 35 years of luminous tech innovation, wrapped in a design that balances heritage and modern edge. Earlier this year, the brand partnered with Force Blue, a nonprofit that empowers Special Operations veterans to aid in marine conservation. Through reef restoration dives and underwater cleanups, veterans use their elite training to heal the ocean, and themselves.

luminox.com
\$1,595



3

TIMEX LEGACY #TIDE 42MM

Timex brings its signature style to the shore with this 42mm stunner—proof that you don't have to spend big to look sharp. A standout from the brand's #tide partnership, this watch turns ocean-bound plastic into a fashion-forward function. The dial, case, and strap are all crafted from recycled materials, while the blue wave face channels major beach vibes. With a 30-meter water resistance rating, it's perfect for casual swims or impromptu dips in the Gulf.

timex.com
\$119

4

ULYSSE NARDIN HAMMERHEAD SHARK DIVER



This elegant diver delivers more than precision; it champions a purpose. Created in collaboration with ocean advocate and shark attack survivor Mike Coots, the design spotlights his mission to protect shark populations and preserve marine ecosystems. A limited-edition release, the watch features a PVD-coated titanium case back engraved with a shark motif. On the rubber strap version, the titanium link is engraved with the 1% for the Planet logo, reflecting Ulysse Nardin's pledge to donate one percent of profits to ocean conservation.

ulyссе-nardin.com
\$12,100



5

SEIKO SPB297 PROSPEX

Seiko has long been a champion of the sea, both in function and in mission. The Japanese brand's dive watches offer serious specs at wallet-friendly prices, and this model delivers with a 70-hour power reserve and 660-foot water resistance rating. In celebration of the 60th anniversary of its dive series, Seiko backed the Peter Benchley Ocean Awards, honoring the *Jaws* author's legacy in marine conservation. Through its Save the Ocean initiative, Seiko also funds coral reef restoration, marine debris cleanup, and a wave of other environmental efforts.

seikowatches.com
\$1,250

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Waves

OF PURPOSE



Kevin Laliberte Turns Surf and Struggle Into a Blueprint for Healing After Military Service

By Martin Liptrot

Where Healing Takes Hold: Veterans find purpose and community through Surf Brigade's surf therapy sessions.

You get the impression Kevin Laliberte really values trust.

Trust in the process, trust in systems, and trust in people.

After all, trust is how he met his wife.

Kevin, originally from New Jersey, was stationed at Hurlburt Field, Northwest Florida, home to Air Force Special Operations Command and the USAF Special Tactics Training Squadron. There, he was instructing tactical parachuting, and she was a newly qualified rigger. In fact, his was the first parachute she ever packed.

That’s trust for you.

Now, after 23 years of service, Kevin is on civvy street.

“The only thing I know is how to transition from military life to the mainstream,” he joked.

But he’s bringing a unique set of skills with him, ones that continue to evolve as he steps into civilian life.

The latter years of Kevin’s career saw him serve as a senior enlisted leader in the U.S. Air Force and Space Force. His role was to ensure that his units were ready to deploy.

“I spent most of my time helping people organize their lives,” Kevin said. “If someone had a reason they couldn’t deploy, it was my job to solve it.”

That could mean overcoming family problems, financial stress, mental health challenges, sobriety struggles, medical issues, even legal or spiritual obstacles.

“So I got really good at helping people understand their problems,” he said. “Too often, they confuse their symptoms, or a solution they’ve already created, for the actual problem.”

People have long placed their trust in

Kevin to help them work through their challenges.

“I learned to quickly identify whether what people told me was really the root cause of their situation or not,” Kevin said. “I’d invite guys into my office—with this giant whiteboard—and we’d map it all out. ‘How did you get here? Then how did you get there? And what led to that?’ Once we laid it out, we could step back and see what the real cause of the problem was.”

Kevin explained that within the military, there are systems and organizations you could trust and call on for help. “There is an entire base full of agencies. There was always a solution; you just needed to know where to find it,” he said.

Since retiring, Kevin has continued to find ways to offer that same kind of support.

“I’m a relatively talkative guy, I’m approachable, and with my military experience, a lot of veterans feel comfortable opening up to me. They place their trust in me,” Kevin said.

Over time, he began to notice a troubling pattern.

“One thing I identified is that a lot of military guys keep the ‘cap on’ during their careers,” Kevin said. “They don’t want to talk about certain things. They worry it might affect their promotions, their standing with peers, their retirement.”

That silence, he explained, often builds pressure.

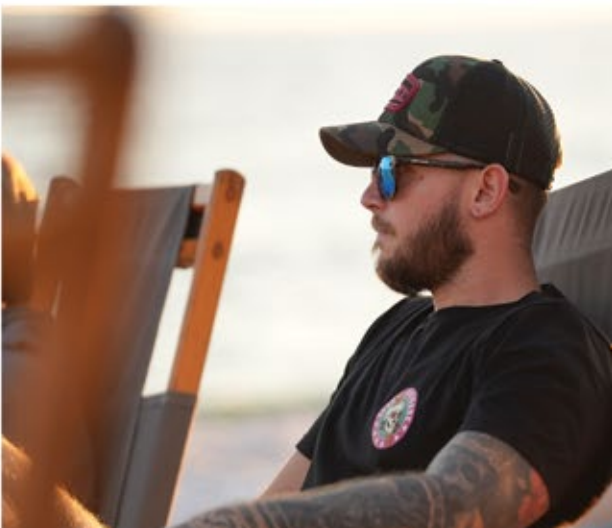
“And then, one day, they retire... and the cap just blows off and 20-plus years of problems start pouring out.”

Kevin was going through his own transition at the time.

“I’d listen to a lot of them. I would go home scratching my head, hearing the



Kevin Laliberte leads with empathy, guiding veterans through conversation and connection after a day in the waves.



“Healing begins in the
saltwater
– with shared stories, shared struggle,
and the space to let go.”





“It’s amazing.
Sometimes the worse it sucks,
the better friends you become.”

same conversation over and over,” he said.

That was the catalyst for Kevin to act.

“The first time I did anything that would eventually become Surf Brigade,” Kevin said, “was with a group of veterans I’d been talking to individually—some I’d served with, and others had been introduced to me.”

He invited them to meet him on Grayton Beach at sunset.

“I said, ‘Trust me, just show up.’”

Kevin brought along a truckload of surfboards and firewood.

“I told them, ‘Everyone’s getting in the water. I don’t care if you surf or not—we’re going to do something fun together and have some conversations.’”

His plan was to ease them in and then open up a discussion.

“My intention was to stand in front of them and say, ‘We all have the same problems, and we should talk to each other.’ But it didn’t take that long.”

By the time Kevin got out of the water, someone had already started the fire, and the veterans were talking, organically and openly.

“I just sat back and listened,” he said.

After that first session, several of the attendees reached out to Kevin and said, “I need to do that again.”

So, for the next year, Kevin held these events once every quarter. The word spread, and soon 150 veterans and their families started getting in touch and showing up. He had to get special event permits, bonfire companies, catering, and surf instructors. It was exciting.

But the veterans’ feedback changed.

“They told me they couldn’t wait three months for the next group and there

were too many people showing up,” Kevin recalled. “They said it was hard to have meaningful conversations with that many people around.”

Kevin listened closely and began to drill down into the conversations he was having. He found that most veterans faced three common challenges after military life: purpose, narrative, and community.

He decided to change what he was doing. He stopped hosting the quarterly events. Instead, he incorporated as a 501(c)(3) called the Surf Brigade Foundation, and published an evidence-based curriculum addressing the three challenges, including a protocol for surf therapy.

I asked Kevin why he put his trust in surfing. He cited the proven mental and physical benefits, but he also noted that there has to be a reason to stay in the saltwater for an extended period, and surfing gave people that reason.

“Healing begins in the saltwater—with shared stories, shared struggle, and the space to let go,” Kevin said.

It also takes guts to open up about problems you may have carried for decades, and Kevin believed surfing was an ideal way to start building that trust.

Another reason surfing worked so well for veterans: It was hard.

“Part of the reason people build such meaningful relationships in the military is because of the shared hardships,” Kevin said. “It’s amazing. Sometimes the worse it sucks, the better friends you become.”

As anyone who has ever tried it will attest, surfing offers plenty of hardships of its own. There are waves crashing over your head, wipeouts, and those wonderfully humbling fails in front of your friends.

Now fully incorporated with a board of directors, Kevin runs two Surf Brigade classes each year—one in the spring and one in the fall.



Each course lasts five weeks and includes a cohort of ten veterans. They commit to meeting every Saturday morning on the beach, and every Wednesday night over Zoom with a professional counselor.

The program follows a structured curriculum designed to help participants move forward.

“Our counselors help veterans identify their individual purpose, write a new narrative beyond the military, and discover the communities they want to be part of,” Kevin said. “They also help them figure out how they’re willing to contribute to those communities.”

By the end of each course, the impact is clear.

There are ten veterans who know each other, share a common bond, and leave with a renewed sense of purpose.

Kevin hopes to expand the program. He wants to run more sessions, reach more veterans, and eventually offer help to others navigating major life transitions.

Living along Florida’s Emerald Coast, Kevin pointed out that there are six major military bases within a 60-mile radius. The broader Northwest Florida region is home to

approximately 150,000 veterans and 50,000 active-duty service members.

“I’ve been contacted about running sessions for cancer survivors and for people who have recently lost a spouse or partner,” he said. “We would love to help more people.”

To keep the courses free for veterans, Kevin begun fundraising. It was a new challenge, but one that came with real opportunities.

“We have partners now who have put their trust in us,” Kevin said.

One U.S.-based surf equipment manufacturer stepped up by donating

surfboards. That same company now produces boards for sale across the country, with a portion of the profits going to Surf Brigade.

“Our veteran cohorts told us they wanted shirts and hats to show their support and pride in the program,” Kevin added. “So, we partnered with the largest veteran-owned apparel company in the country and started selling them through our website.”

He explained the model in simple terms.

“It’s a straightforward equation. We fund the foundation’s work by selling shirts and surf gear.”

Kevin also shares his vision for the future.

“My goal is to run a surf therapy session every month. I want to keep veterans plugged in and continuing to grow,” he said. “Right now, we don’t have the capacity to do that. But if we can reach our sales goals, we can make it happen.”

People have already shown generosity, offering time and professional services—everything from legal advice to accounting support. The foundation has also built strong relationships with professional counselors who support their mission. Still, the cost of running surf

therapy programs is significant, and demand continues to grow faster than the resources available.

“I trust the work we’re doing and the journey we’re on,” Kevin said. “But most importantly, our veterans trust us to help them navigate life’s waves with renewed resilience and strength.” 🌊

Want to support surf therapy for veterans? Learn more and get involved at surfbrigade.com.

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Photo by Aerial 850

Why Seaside Is Poised to Become 30A's Next Real Estate Hotspot

Smart Planning and a Wave of New Investment Are Fueling a Fresh Evolution in This Iconic Beach Town

By Geoff Nudelman

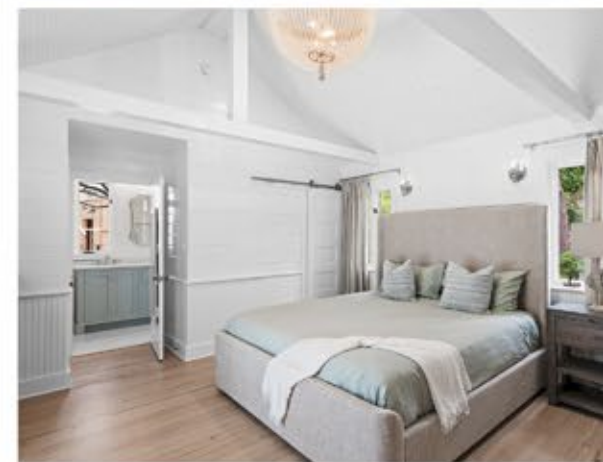
When Seaside was founded in 1981, carefully crafting an 80-acre parcel of land with progressive planning and land use was still considered a far-fetched idea along the Emerald Coast.

The goal was to revive traditional town-building principles, prioritizing walkability, compact mixed-use buildings, and flexible codes. The vision was to create a small but forward-thinking town that could grow gracefully. As 30A blossomed around it, Seaside made the area relevant, and now it's evolving once again to meet new challenges and opportunities.

"Seaside is less about the homes and more about the layout of the town," said Scenic Sotheby's International Realty's global real estate advisor Richard Jabbour, a Seaside resident since 2017 and a 30A local since 2010. His wife, Gayle, was an original Rosemary Beach homeowner, having built her residence there in 1996 before they relocated to Seaside to begin a new chapter together.



35 Tupelo Street:
a modern take on
classic Seaside



486 Forest Street:
a top-tier transformation



Generational Shift Meets Coastal Classic

Tucked inside Santa Rosa Beach, Seaside's pedestrian-first layout is a design hallmark: every street runs north to south, ending directly at the Gulf. Sidewalks encourage strolling, the central amphitheater doubles as the town's retention pond, and access to the beach and Gulf views is unmatched by neighboring communities.

Now approaching its 45th anniversary, Seaside is experiencing a generational shift, reflected in both its residents and its real estate.

With one of the most flexible building codes on 30A, Seaside has always

encouraged creativity. Today, that ethos is driving a new wave of transformation: buyers are reimagining 1980s and '90s homes through total rebuilds or substantial renovations that blend modern luxury with Seaside's timeless spirit.

Modernizing the Vision

The Jabbours exemplify this transformation. After a complete reimagining of their home at 35 Tupelo Street, they've now listed the property as they prepare to move to another residence within Seaside.

The 3,952-square-foot home was reconstructed with full-time living in mind—open, bright, and designed for

entertaining. The Jabbours also added an 800-square-foot carriage house featuring two bedrooms, two-and-a-half bathrooms, a full kitchen, and a laundry area, offering complete flexibility for guests or rentals.

"We worked with architect Robert Orr, one of the original architects of Seaside," Jabbour said.

As real estate values continue to rise in Seaside, the sale of 35 Tupelo could set a new benchmark for elevated living in the community. Buyers are increasingly seeking this blend of architectural heritage and high-end amenities—and homeowners like the Jabbours are ready to meet that demand.

Jabbour considers himself woven into Seaside's fabric. While he would welcome more full-time residents, he understands the town's unique identity.

"Seaside is a resort town and best supported by the vacation community that may own, but only visit a few weeks a year or rent out their properties when they're not in town," he noted. "The original vision was not to have a community of rental homes, but it turned out that way."

A Bridge for the Future

That's what makes 486 Forest Street—another home currently on the market—so compelling. While 35 Tupelo represents a top-tier transformation,

this 2,294-square-foot bungalow offers a more approachable entry point into Seaside living.

Just a few blocks from the shoreline and steps from the amphitheater, 486 Forest was remodeled to appeal to both vacationers and long-term residents. The home features three bedrooms, three-and-a-half bathrooms, including a separate cottage with its own bathroom and kitchenette.

Towers are another architectural feature unique to Seaside. These structures provide Gulf views even for homes not directly on the beach, an intentional design element that boosts both charm and value.

Only 15 to 20 of Seaside's 355 homes house full-time residents, according to Jabbour. Properties like 486 Forest offer a "bridge," which is ideal for families wanting roots with room to rent.

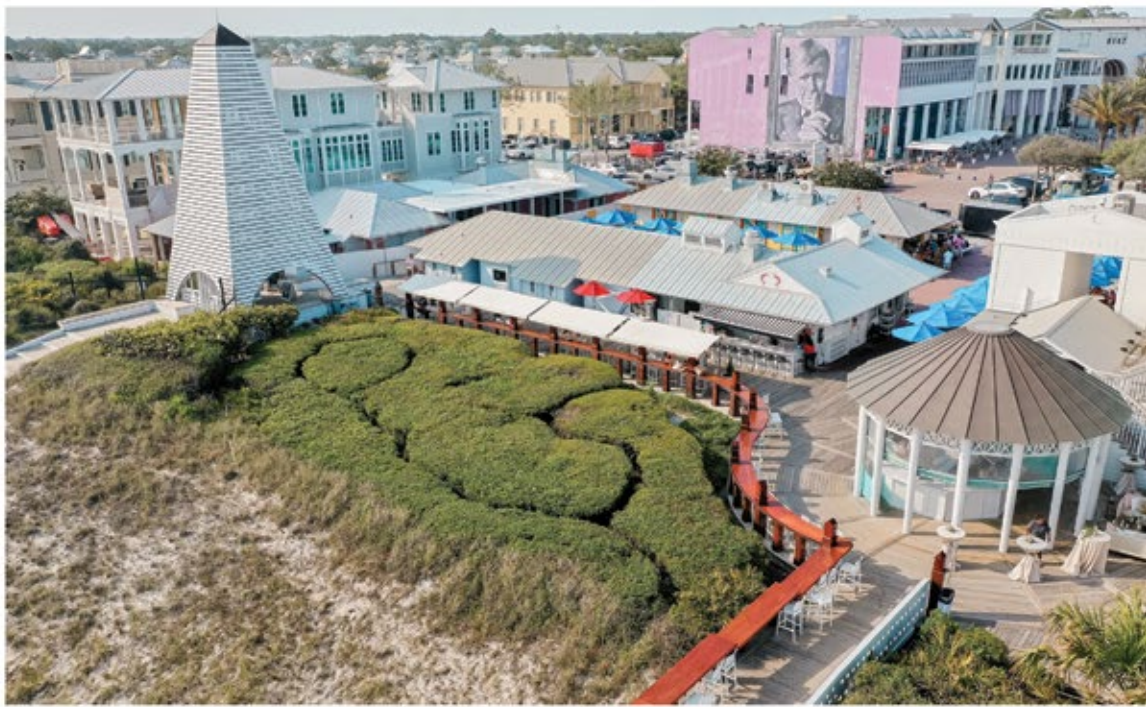
"There is a mix of building opportunities here," he added.

Commercial Cool Meets Classic Character

Seaside's evolution isn't just residential—it's commercial, too. Built around the central amphitheater, the town's "downtown" is a walkable hub filled with shops and restaurants, many of which grew organically over time.



Front-Row Seat to the Gulf:
35 Tupelo's porch serves up
classic Seaside charm with
unbeatable views to match.



Unlike most beach communities, Seaside prioritized beachside retail from the beginning. The amphitheater, a vibrant gathering spot, also serves a critical purpose: capturing and redirecting stormwater from the north-south streets.

Many of Seaside's beloved businesses began modestly. Sundog Books, for instance, launched in 1985 as a small plywood shack. Today, it's a treasured cultural landmark.

Jabbour sees all of this as proof that Seaside's foundational vision is still evolving.

"Seaside is uniquely positioned to become the most luxurious and sought-after community again," he said. "Because it is in a clear renewal phase, as many new homes emerge, at some point it will be the youngest community on 30A again. People need to think about that. It is truly compelling."

From its trailblazing urban plan to its modern-day home transformations, Seaside remains a symbol of intentional growth and development. As a new wave of homeowners enters the picture, the town's charm and forward-thinking design continue to offer an irresistible blueprint for life on 30A. 🏡

Want to see more of Seaside's next chapter? Discover the town's evolution, tour featured homes, and connect with the experts leading the way at JabbourLuxuryGroup.com.

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Sippin'

on the Sunshine State



A Preview of Florida Cocktails, a Book That Pours the Sunshine State's Wild, Weird, and Wonderful Spirit Into Every Glass

By Carrie Honaker

Cocktails aren't just drinks. They are stories told with rum and resin, fruit and fire, legacy and local swagger. This book journeys through that cocktail culture, a travelogue through bars, beaches, distilleries, and personalities that have shaped and reshaped how Florida drinks, and why that matters.

I started in Key West, where the ghosts of Captain Tony, Hemingway, and Jimmy Buffett still haunt the barstools. Then I traced the coast up through the Gulf, where beach bars bleed into tiki joints and marina dives, where the smell of sunscreen lingers and happy hour starts when the sun

comes up because you can't drink all day if you don't start early.

I sipped my first punch bowl in St. Pete.

Once the celebratory centerpiece of colonial drinking, punch was nearly lost to time. It's said that 76 bowls of punch were consumed at the signing of the Declaration of Independence. But industrial efficiency and Victorian restraint nearly wiped it off bar menus. Now it's back, reclaiming its communal roots in places like Cane & Barrel in St. Pete. "It's not just a drink, it's an experience," said manager Joel Valencia. Their version tells the story of Florida's layered Latin



heritage, blending tropical fruits and spices found in Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban, and Dominican kitchens. “It’s something to share, like you do around a family table,” Valencia added.

And sharing is what Florida’s cocktail scene does best.

Boat drinks existed long before Jimmy Buffett wrote them into legend. But his influence is inescapable—from the frozen rum runners slung at floating parties in Destin to the lyrics scrawled on the walls at Flora-Bama, the state-straddling roadhouse on Perdido Key where I drank a doozy of a Bushwacker. Launched by the Tampary family in 1964, Flora-Bama became an institution through its grit, live music, and the strange loophole that allowed the Florida side to serve booze while Alabama’s remained dry.

This state’s drinking culture thrived in loopholes. Take Captain Bill McCoy, the real-life smuggler whose pure, uncut rum shipments from Bimini to South Florida during Prohibition earned him

the nickname “The Real McCoy.” His vessels waited just beyond the invisible boundary of U.S. jurisdiction in an area known as Rum Row. I found that blend of history and hedonism everywhere in Florida. In Tallahassee, the elegant Bar 1903 occupies what was once one of the state’s first libraries. It’s part cocktail lounge, part living archive. Their “Athenaeum” traces 150 years of drinking history, reminding guests that the craft of the cocktail didn’t start on Instagram—it started in punch bowls and apothecaries. Meanwhile, in St. Augustine, the Ice Plant distills local spirits in a repurposed factory where Florida’s history lingers in the baseboards and the bourbon.

While beach bars may be the state’s beating heart, Florida’s cocktail renaissance didn’t skip the city. In Miami, Julio Cabrera and his cantinero-style bartenders brought Cuban elegance and hospitality to center stage, while I sipped Flamingo Mojitos. At Sweet Liberty, bartender Naren Young revived the long-forgotten Florida Cocktail, a tribute to native

ingredients and the idea that Florida flavors deserve a seat at the craft cocktail table.

Of course, not all innovation comes in a coupe glass.

Karen and Greg Darby’s Cruisin’ Tikis—a floating tiki bar concept born from their backyard in Fort Lauderdale—turned the notion of a mobile bar into a Florida sensation. Inspired by that same ethos, the team at Boat Drinks in St. Augustine built a bar around nostalgia. “Nobody was doing quality frozen or tropical drinks anymore,” co-founder Rob Crabtree said. “All these historic Florida beach bars, dive bars, and marina bars were disappearing as development ramped up. I missed being on my dad’s houseboat and hanging out in marina bars with him. I love that happy hour vibe, the camaraderie that erupts at 4 or 5 o’clock when everyone decides it’s time for drinks.”

Their Scuttlebutt Swizzle is a dangerously delicious cocktail. For some, the drink is an escape. For others, it’s storytelling.

At Daytrader Tiki Bar in Seaside, Florida, Chef Nikhil Abuvala reimagines tiki without cultural appropriation. His drinks come in vintage glassware or blood bags (an idea born at a Halloween party) and use fresh, balanced ingredients. It’s a modern take on tiki, with integrity at its core. His Korean fried chicken and a batch of The Remedy (his take on the Mai Tai) are what inspired this new wave of creative cocktails.

Even Florida’s packaging is evolving. Half Shell Vodka debuted the country’s first cardboard spirit bottle, made from 97% recycled materials and producing a carbon footprint six times smaller than glass. “We camp, hunt, and think about conservation. We’ve been taught since we were little that you pack out what you pack in, you don’t overuse your resources,” co-owner Harrison Holditch said. “We carried that with us as we set up the distillery and moved to this type of bottle.”

For Justin Levaughn, an outdoorsman and environmentalist, Florida’s lesser-known ecosystems provide an ingredient list at Otto’s High Dive in Orlando. “I love incorporating native flora, fauna, and produce into drinks,” he said. “If I’m not surfing, I’m hiking, kayaking, exploring. Florida inspires what I pour.”

Ultimately, what defines Florida’s cocktail culture isn’t the spirits or the bars—it’s the sense of place. It’s about where you are when the drink hits your hand. It’s the Daiquiri Classico Hemingway drank in Cuba and Julio Cabrera carried to Miami. It’s the tiki drinks at the Mai-Kai, where bartender Kern Mattei Jr. still honors tradition with a twist of lemongrass or mezcal. It’s the secret speakeasy in Tampa. The neon-lit lounge in Fort Lauderdale. The backyard-turned-bar on the Intracoastal.



It’s the feeling you get when you’re barefoot at the bar, salty from the ocean, talking to a stranger who might be a shrimp boat captain or a Fortune 500 CEO. “You’re just at the bar,” said Andy McCoski, owner of Chiringo, in Grayton Beach, Florida. “Good music, the slight smell of sunscreen. My childhood in South Florida was Coppertone-infused. The only thing I miss is the smell of boat gas. It reminds me of being a kid.”

So, sip slowly. Wander freely. There’s a story in every glass. Whether you’re floating on a tiki boat, standing on Rum Row, or seated at a quiet bar inside an old library, Florida has always known how to blur the line between reality and escape.

And it always tastes better with a lime wedge and a splash of sunshine. ☀

*Check out **Florida Cocktails**, a spirited guide to the stories, techniques, and more than 100 recipes that define the Sunshine State’s signature sips—complete with a coastal playlist curated by 30A’s own Mike Ragsdale.*

*Order it from Amazon or support local by purchasing through **Hidden Lantern’s Bookshop** page, bookshop.org/shop/thl*

Raise a Glass to the Sunshine State: Read On to Discover 4 Iconic Florida Cocktails You Can Make at Home

From tiki to tangy, these recipes serve up a taste of Florida’s legendary cocktail culture—one swizzle, splash, and salted rim at a time. Whether you’re beachside or just dreaming of it, each sip tells a story of sun, salt, and spirited creativity.

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RUM RUNNER

TIKI BAR AT THREE WATERS RESORT & MARINA
84001 OVERSEAS HIGHWAY, ISLAMORADA

Opened in 1969, the original Holiday Isle Tiki Bar transported guests to a tropical paradise with its bamboo furniture, Polynesian masks, dim lighting, beach views, and tiki cocktails. John Ebert concocted the Rum Runner, their signature drink, as an homage to Florida’s notorious rumrunners such as “Captain” Bill McCoy. Over the years, the Tiki Bar has evolved and changed flags but still embraces its nostalgic charm and signature drinks. “This classic cocktail captures the essence of our Tiki Bar with its balanced mix of rum, banana and blackberry liqueurs, and tropical juices. It’s visually stunning and incredibly refreshing,” says resort manager Hicham El Ibrik.



GLASSWARE: Rum Runner glass

GARNISH: Cherry, orange slice

- 2 oz. orange juice
- 1 oz. Don Q 151°
- 1 oz. fresh lime juice
- 3/4 oz. Giffard Banane du Brésil
- 1/2 oz. grenadine
- 1/2 oz. Giffard Crème de Mûre

1. Combine all of the ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice and shake.

2. Strain the cocktail into a Rum Runner glass filled with ice.

3. Garnish with an orange slice and a cherry.

GLASSWARE: 12 oz. plastic cup

GARNISH: Toasted coconut flakes, Amarena cherry

- 2 oz. Caribbean rum
- 2 oz. Coco López Cream of Coconut
- 2 oz. pineapple juice
- 1/4 oz. fresh lime juice

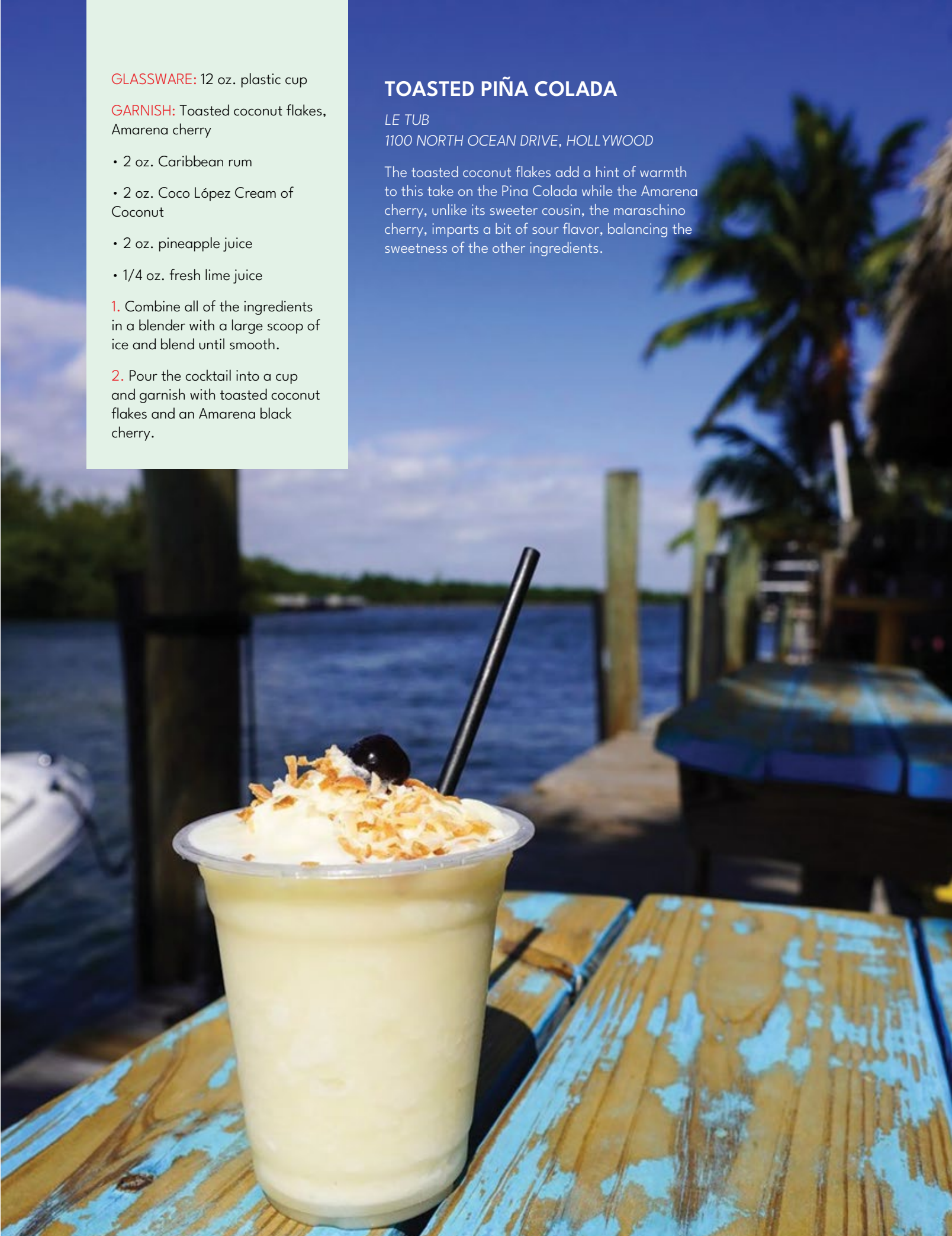
1. Combine all of the ingredients in a blender with a large scoop of ice and blend until smooth.

2. Pour the cocktail into a cup and garnish with toasted coconut flakes and an Amarena black cherry.

TOASTED PIÑA COLADA

LE TUB
1100 NORTH OCEAN DRIVE, HOLLYWOOD

The toasted coconut flakes add a hint of warmth to this take on the Pina Colada while the Amarena cherry, unlike its sweeter cousin, the maraschino cherry, imparts a bit of sour flavor, balancing the sweetness of the other ingredients.



SCUTTLEBUTT SWIZZLE

BOAT DRINKS
56 ST GEORGE STREET, ST. AUGUSTINE

Co-owner Rob Crabtree advises that this take on a Jasper’s Rum Punch recipe demands a rum that can stand up to bold flavors, so be sure to use an overproof Jamaican rum. Crabtree made a batch of the punch as Hurricane Michael blew into town in 2018, right before they opened the bar. “I knew it would keep my lime juice fresh and I had plenty of rum and ice so I made a couple quarts of it. We sipped it, adding a little soda water to dilute it slightly, and that version became the basis of the Scuttlebutt Swizzle,” he says. They serve it filled with ice because the drink keeps evolving as it dilutes. “This is not for the faint of heart. She is beautiful. She’s so delicious, and she’s been on our menu since day one,” co-owner Whitney Hobbs says.

- GLASSWARE:** Tall tropical glass
- GARNISH:** Freshly grated nutmeg, mint sprig
- 1 1/2 oz. Hampden Estate Rum Fire
 - 1 1/2 oz. Scuttlebutt Mix (see recipe)
 - Soda water, to top
1. Combine the rum and Scuttlebutt Mix in a cocktail shaker with a little ice and whip-shake.
 2. Pour the cocktail into a tall tropical glass. Top with ice and soda water and swizzle to combine.
 3. Garnish with freshly grated nutmeg and a mint sprig.

Scuttlebutt Mix: Blend 2 oz. fresh lime juice and 2 oz. sugar in a blender until combined. Stir in 1 fat teaspoon Angostura bitters. Add in dried hibiscus flowers, to taste, and let the mixture steep for 2 to 12 hours in the refrigerator. Strain the mix and store it in the refrigerator.



- GLASSWARE:** Rocks glass
- GARNISH:** Fresh mint sprig, Tajín-dusted orange slice
- 2 oz. Blanco tequila
 - 1/2 oz. Kalani Coconut Liqueur
 - 3/4 oz. Florida Tea Syrup (see recipe)
 - 3/4 oz. fresh lime juice

1. Combine all of the ingredients in a cocktail shaker tin with ice. Shake and strain into a rocks glass over pebble ice.
2. Garnish with a mint sprig and Tajin-dusted orange slice.

Florida Tea Syrup: Combine equal parts dried hibiscus flowers, rose hips, orange blossoms, dehydrated apples, dehydrated pineapples, and toasted coconut to make 1 cup dried tea mix. In a saucepan boil 4 cups water, then steep the tea in the boiling water for 3 minutes. Turn the heat to low. Add 2 quarts unrefined sugar and simmer, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat and allow the syrup to cool. Strain and store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

FLORIDIAN SLIP

OTTO’S HIGH DIVE
2304 EAST ROBINSON STREET, ORLANDO

For those looking for a delicious take on a Margarita, Otto’s High Dive co-owner Justin Levaughn serves you the Floridian Slip. “Some of the best produce we are known for in Florida is dehydrated to preserve its lifespan. I pull from that cache as needed to make the Florida Tea Syrup. The tea on its own is great as well,” he says.



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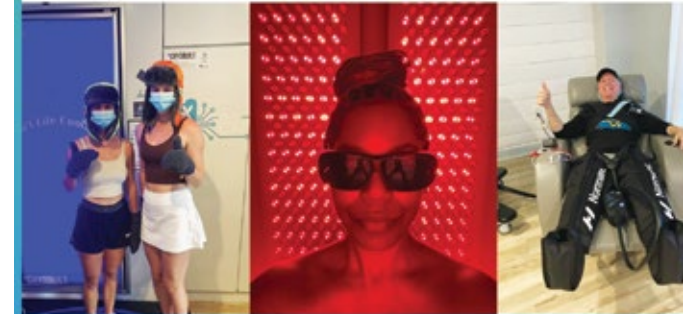


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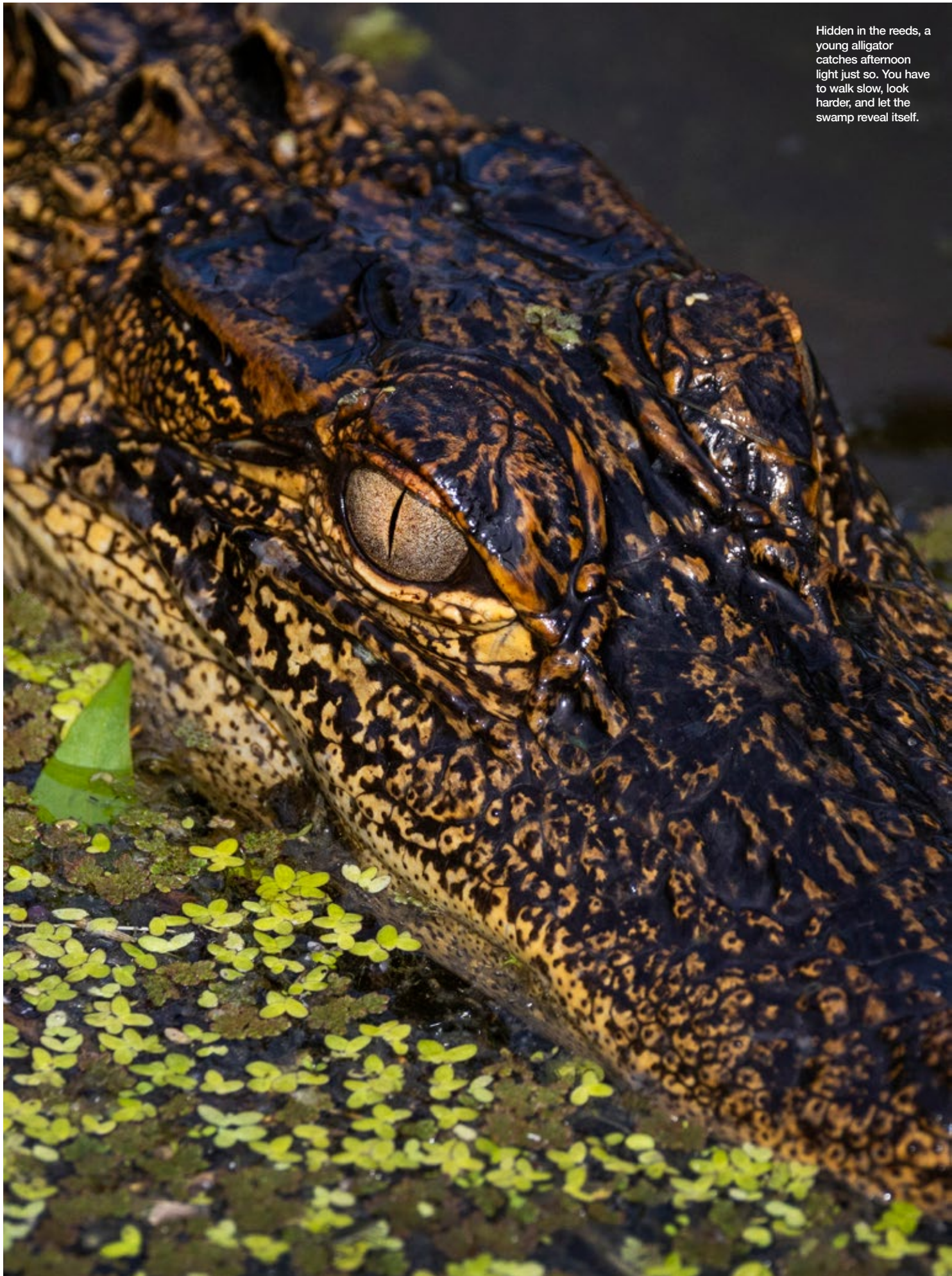
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Hidden in the reeds, a young alligator catches afternoon light just so. You have to walk slow, look harder, and let the swamp reveal itself.

WILD BY NATURE



A lone heron steps through rose-gold shallows on St. Joseph Bay. I waited waist-deep in silence, hoping the light and the bird would align—and, for a moment, they did.



PHOTOGRAPHER MIKE FENDER FRAMES THE SOUL OF THE COAST BY SUSAN GUNN

It seems like you'd have to live several lifetimes to experience all that photographer Mike Fender has in just over five decades. Born in Georgia and raised in Ohio, the veteran photojournalist has spent decades capturing life through a lens. The eldest of three siblings and a father of three, he started out working for newspapers across the country. At 22, he left Ohio for a staff job in California, and four years later moved to Indianapolis to become Chief Photographer at *The Indianapolis News*.

A graduate of Wright State University and the University of Dayton, with formal training in technical photography, Fender brings a sharp eye for visual storytelling. He's covered Super Bowls, NBA Finals, over thirty Indy 500s, and quiet moments of coastal wildlife. His lens has seen it all. He also served two terms as President of the Associated Press Photo Managers' Organization.

After decades focused on human stories, a personal loss turned his attention toward nature. Now based in Mexico Beach, he's a freelance writer and photographer, channeling his late mother's love of nature into every frame. Fender's humility contrasts with the remarkable scope of his career. I recently sat down with him to learn more about this next chapter.

How would you describe your photography style?

If I had to describe my style, it always comes back to storytelling. No matter what I shoot, I want people to feel like they were there with me. I aim for clean, well-composed images with simple backgrounds. I look for emotion or action that elevates the image beyond documentation. With wildlife, I try to show behavior or personality—that's where the story lives.

What draws you to wildlife, and how does it compare to photographing people?

Most of my career has been about people. Sports photography was always the most challenging. I've covered the Super Bowl, NBA Finals, the Indy 500, and even traveled to Africa for adoption stories. I approached every assignment with a storytelling mindset.

But when my mom passed away in October 2023, everything changed. She lived on a 100-acre nature preserve and loved the outdoors. I used to visit and take nature photos just to share with her. She was my biggest fan and a huge influence. After she passed, I felt drawn more and more to wildlife.

It's like a hunt. I enjoy the quiet chase—waiting, watching, being patient. I'm a hunter, but with a camera. There's something primal about tracking an animal and being ready when the moment arrives. I hadn't really captured a great eagle photo until about a year ago. Now I have dozens. That comes from patience, time in the field, and openness to what nature offers. Wildlife photography also teaches humility. There's always



Fresh from the nest, two great horned owlets test the world, and each other. In the hush of early freedom, they find flight, play, and their place in the wild.

A rainy day yields a rare moment—two eagles locked in a quiet stare. Nature doesn't cancel for weather, and neither should we.



A ghost crab freezes mid-step, nearly invisible against the sand. Sometimes the best shot comes on a walk with no gear, guided only by instinct, light, and presence.



Wading where sea meets sky, four young deer cross through the quiet water. For a Midwesterner, seeing them here, bathed in coastal light, felt like magic.

An osprey climbs high with its prize, a silver catch glinting in the air. I could watch these birds all day; calm above, chaos below.



some luck involved. When luck and skill meet, it's an incredible feeling. It really is a sport of its own.

Your images often explore the relationship between people and nature. What's your take on our role in protecting the wild?

For me, it's all about connection. When I walk a deserted beach and find a ghost crab or a hunting eagle, it feels personal. I'll sit for hours, just observing, photographing quietly with no one around. That kind of solitude is rare—and this area still offers it.

People miss out on that when they chase the crowds. I was in the Smokies recently and saw cars lined up through Cades Cove, everyone hoping to glimpse wildlife. When something appeared, the crowds swarmed. It didn't feel respectful.

My best advice: go where others don't. Don't follow the crowd. Florida's Wildlife Corridor is an incredible example—10 million acres of protected land. There's space for nature to breathe. We all need to do more to protect our wild places. Sometimes, that just means stepping back and letting nature be.

How has coastal life influenced your photography?

I spent most of my life in Ohio and Indiana, photographing people in cities and small towns. I loved the variety—Amish communities, farmers, urban life. It was rich ground for photojournalism.

But the coast is something else. It's old Florida, the kind that existed before theme parks and crowds. Every time I vacationed here, I never wanted to leave. Now I live in Mexico Beach, five minutes from the shore. Every day I wake up to a landscape that still feels wild and untouched in places. It's quiet, ancient, and full of character—that "Forgotten Coast."

The contrast between where I came from and where I am now is fueling a whole new chapter of my work. I've never felt more at peace behind the camera. It's a new kind of passion, and it feels like I'm just getting started.

Step quietly into the wild. View more of Mike Fender's coastal captures at mikefender.com or follow along on Facebook (@mikefenderphotography) and Instagram (@mike_fender_photography).



This scrappy dockside pelican works the fishermen like a pro. No need to wander far; some of the best wildlife stories happen just across the street.

A storm-tossed boat lies capsized near Gulf Coast State College. From the air, its story changes as disruption becomes geometry and ruin becomes reflection.



On the 4th of July, the whole coast becomes a canvas. From St. Andrews to Inlet Beach, 27 miles of color light up the sky in one long, glowing breath.



An elder sea turtle, lifeless on the sand, faces the Gulf one last time. I like to think it came for the sunset, just one more before the tide carried it home.



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Styx

MIRAMAR BEACH, FL

OCTOBER 9-11, 2025

Styx

Two Headline Performances • Get with Fall Band

Loverboy Cheap Trick 38 SPECIAL

COLLECTIVE A.U.L. KIN WATTE GOWAN

HOSTED BY EDDIE TRUNK

LUKE COMBS

BOOTLEGGERS BONFIRE

OCTOBER 23-25, 2025

MIRAMAR BEACH, FL

PERFORMING WITH

LUKE COMBS
THE CASTELLOWS

PERFORMING WITH

DAVID LEE MURPHY
DYLAN MARLOWE

PERFORMING WITH

LUKE COMBS
ELLA LANGLEY

MOON CRUSH

WHISKEY MOON

MIRAMAR BEACH, FL

PERFORMING WITH

WHISKEY MYERS
ST. PAUL & THE BROKEN BONES
KASHUS CULPEPPER THE DROPTONES

PERFORMING WITH

CHARLEY CROCKETT
JOSH MELOY

PERFORMING WITH

THE RECORD COMPANY • NOELINE HOFMANN

PERFORMING WITH

WHISKEY MYERS
SHANE SMITH & THE SAINTS
STEPHEN WILSON JR. • ANGEL WHITE

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2025

MOON CRUSH

Odies

MIRAMAR BEACH, FL

NOVEMBER 13-15, 2025

BEACH VACATION

OLD DOMINION

TWO SPECIAL PERFORMANCES

BROTHERS OSBORNE
SHAGGY • RUSSELL DICKERSON
MICHAEL FRANTI & SPEARHEAD
NIKO MOON

MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON

SPEND THE WEEKEND WITH OLD DOMINION!

BEACH ACTIVITIES • COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

CATCH THE SET YOU'LL NEVER FORGET

JOE BONAMASSA'S

SOUNDWAVE

BEACH WEEKEND

PERFORMING WITH

JOE BONAMASSA

TWO SPECIAL PERFORMANCES • ARTIST COLLABORATIONS

GOV'T MULE
KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD
JJ GREY & MOFO • GRACE POTTER
LITTLE FEAT • LARKIN POE • SAMANTHA FISH
JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR • ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

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SUN, SAND AND SOUL

APRIL 23-25, 2026



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Life's short. Get the beach house!

10 of Our Favorite Beach Homes on the Market Along Scenic Highway 30A

By Karina Caraballo



41 Sea Walk Circle is a true masterpiece of luxury and design, offering an unparalleled living experience. Spanning 6,608 square feet, this exceptional estate seamlessly blends elegance, expert craftsmanship and natural beauty. From the moment you step into the first-floor foyer, you will be welcomed by exquisite attention to detail, where every inch of the home has been meticulously crafted with precision and care.
LISTED BY LISA LAFLURE

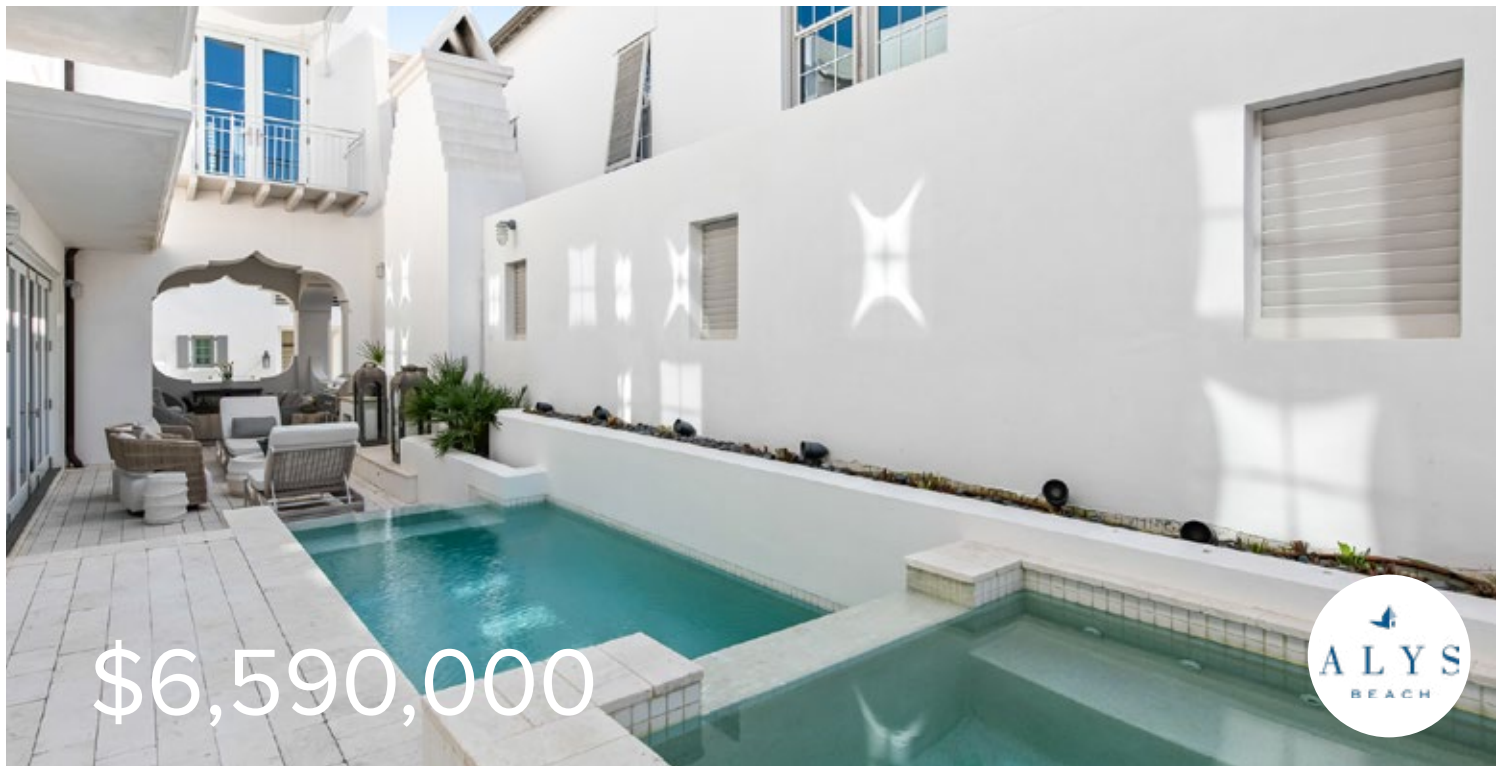
41 Sea Walk Circle
Seagrove, FL
6 BED | 6/3 BATH | 6,608 SQ. FT.



Designed by renowned architect Geoff Chick, this unique Arboleda Point home is one of six homes in a gated golf-cart-friendly enclave that embraces privacy and nature. With 100 feet of private waterfront, this exclusive residence includes a 40-foot boat slip, making it perfect for days of fishing, boating and watersports. Looking perfectly at ease within an incredible natural landscape dotted with moss-draped oaks, this custom home makes excellent use of natural materials to reflect this pristine environment.
LISTED BY WHITNEY COOLEY

59 Arboleda Drive
Santa Rosa Beach, FL
5 BED | 4/2 BATH | 5,174 SQ. FT.





14 Shinbone Court
Alys Beach, FL

4 BED | 3/2 BATH | 3,150 SQ. FT.

Experience the quintessential Alys Beach lifestyle at 14 Shinbone Court, where stunning water views of the Gulf of Mexico await you from the captivating third-story roof terrace. Nestled along the picturesque Seagarden Walk Pedestrian Path, this newly listed residence is just six homes removed from direct beach access to the pristine white sands of the Gulf of Mexico.
LISTED BY ALYS BEACH SALES TEAM



140 North Charles Street
Alys Beach, FL

6 BED | 7.5 BATH | 6,880 SQ. FT.

Introducing Aspri Villa, one of the largest Compound Houses in Alys Beach offering the largest pool and courtyard area in all of Alys Beach which exudes the feel of a private boutique hotel. Centrally located on North Charles Street overlooking Papilio Park, this house defines the streetscape with a 3rd floor Tower Room that provides horizon views over the whitewashed rooftops of the town.
LISTED BY ALYS BEACH SALES TEAM



This single-story Marco Plan features 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, a den, and a 2-car garage on a corner homesite. The kitchen includes quartz countertops, 18" upper cabinets with glass doors and lighting, a 36" gas cooktop, and under-cabinet lighting with a valance. The open-concept layout connects to a spacious great room, while French doors lead to a covered lanai with a privacy wall and views of the lake and preserve.
LISTED BY KOLTER HOMES

20 Dunns Circle
Watersound, FL

3 BED | 3 BATH | 2,320 SQ. FT.



The Marco Plan offers a thoughtful blend of space and functionality in a single-story layout featuring 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, a flexible den, and an extended 2-car garage. At the heart of the home, the open-concept kitchen is equipped with 18" upper cabinets with illuminated glass doors, a 36" gas cooktop, quartz countertops, and under-cabinet lighting. Outdoors, a large covered lanai overlooks a backyard with lake and preserve views, complete with a privacy wall and ready for a future pool.
LISTED BY KOLTER HOMES

112 Dunns Circle
Watersound, FL

3 BED | 3 BATH | 2,320 SQ. FT.





\$3,690,000

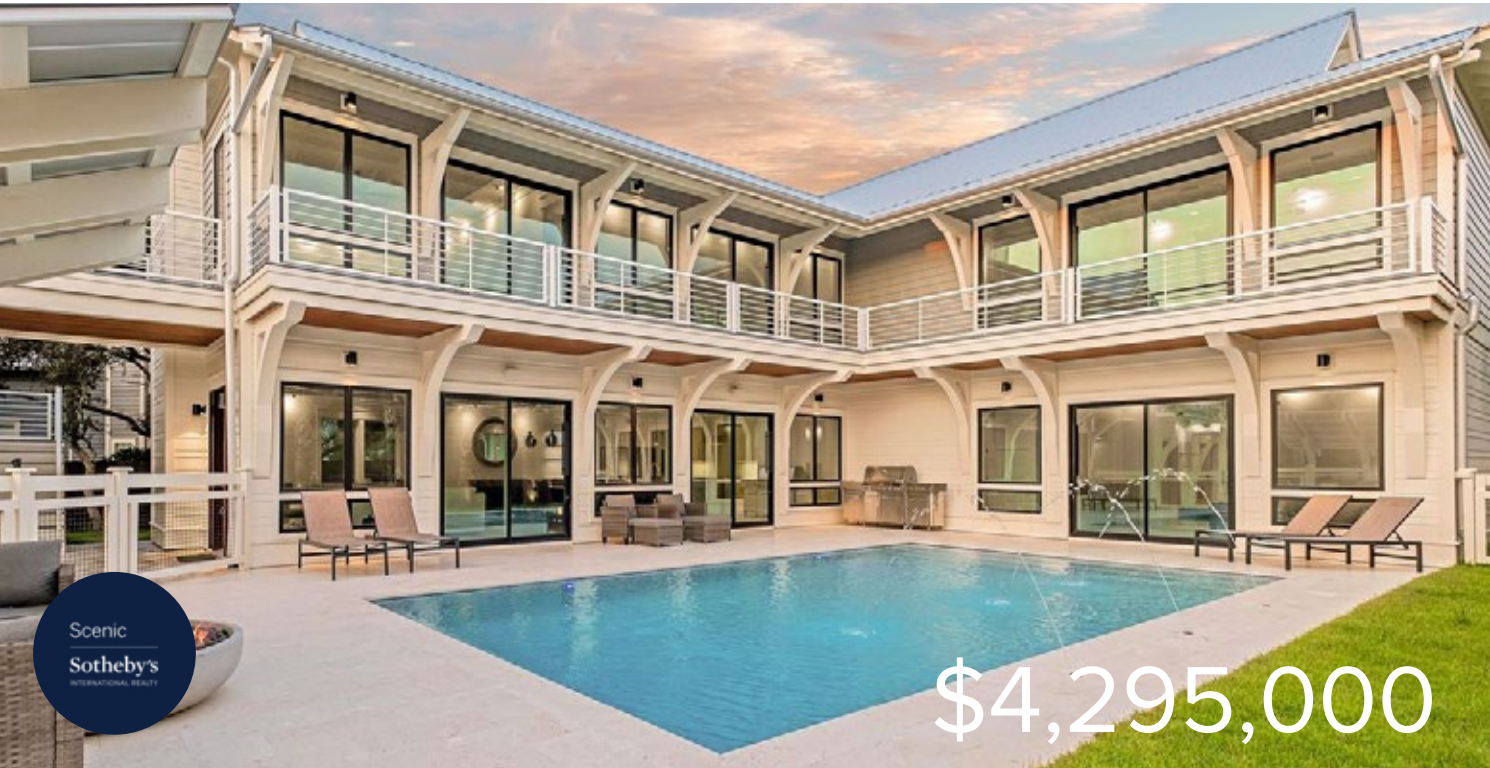
Scenic
Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY



55 Seastone Court
Watersound, FL

5 BED | 5/2 BATH | 4,454 SQ. FT.

Conceived by architect Chris Stoyles and brought to life by Turner Legacy Homes, 55 Seastone Court is the crown jewel of Watersound Origins, offering more than 4,400 square feet of custom luxury and a private outdoor oasis—all just steps from golf, fitness, and the laid-back charm of this family-friendly neighborhood.
LISTED BY ANNA CALLAWAY



\$4,295,000

Scenic
Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

Located on 30A between Alys Beach and WaterSound and just a block from the beach, this newly completed home is brimming with quality features, from hardwood flooring and coffered ceilings to shiplap walls and textured tiles. Uniquely designed as a two-story residence, this home offers a more accessible, livable layout than others without sacrificing space or luxury. The broad paved driveway provides a grand approach to the main home and carriage house above the two-car garage. **LISTED BY BLAKE MORAR**

56 Pelican Glide Lane
Seacrest, FL

8 BED | 7.5 BATH | 5,631 SQ. FT.



\$2,200,000

THE AGENCY



88 N Cypress Breeze Blvd
Santa Rosa Beach, FL

4 BED | 4 BATH | 2,852 SQ. FT.

Offered fully furnished, this luxury home in gated Cypress Breeze blends refined craftsmanship with resort-style living just minutes from the beach. Soaring ceilings, a dramatic staircase, and a designer kitchen with Wolf, Sub-Zero, and Miele appliances define the upscale interior. The open layout flows to a private backyard retreat with a pool, spa, fire features, and summer kitchen.
LISTED BY LISA COLLIER AND AMY BERRY



\$8,750,000

ALYS
BEACH

Easterly 402 enjoys unobstructed expansive views of the beach and the emerald waters that this coastline is famous for. Primely located adjacent to the Beach Club Plaza and Owner Exclusive Beach Club, this is a rare opportunity to call this premium residence yours. Designed by Scott Merrill, this 3 bedroom plus bunk room residence opens to generous covered porches and balconies to take in the sea breezes and sounds of the lapping waves. **LISTED BY ALYS BEACH SALES TEAM**

Easterly 402
Alys Beach, FL

3 BED | 3.5 BATH | 2,415 SQ. FT.





Since 2007, our annual 30A Hot Spot Awards have celebrated the very best of the beach towns along Florida's Scenic Highway 30-A in Northwest Florida. From standout dining and memorable events to beloved boutiques, local talent, and natural escapes, these awards shine a spotlight on the people and places that define the 30A experience.

Voted by fans, locals, and visitors alike, this year's winners reflect the heart and soul of the community, the favorites that keep people coming back year after year.

Ready to see who made the list? Here are your 2025 30A Hot Spot Award winners—your most-loved spots along this unforgettable stretch of coast.

1. CASUAL DINING

WINNER: Shunk Gulley Oyster Bar
2nd Place: Red Bar
3rd Place: Pickles Sandbar

2. FINE DINING

WINNER: Cafe Thirty-A
2nd Place: Ambrosia 30A Prime Seafood & Steaks
3rd Place: Pescado Seafood Grill & Rooftop Bar

3. OUTDOOR DINING

WINNER: Old Florida Fish House
2nd Place: The Bay
3rd Place: Shunk Gulley Oyster Bar

4. DINING WITH A VIEW

WINNER: Bud & Alley's Waterfront Restaurant & Bar
2nd Place: Pescado Seafood Grill & Rooftop Bar
3rd Place: Shunk Gulley Oyster Bar

5. DOG-FRIENDLY DINING

WINNER: North Beach Social
2nd Place: Pickles Sandbar
3rd Place: Chiringo

6. COFFEE

WINNER: Black Bear Bread Co.
2nd Place: Amavida Coffee Roasters
3rd Place: Fonville Press

[NOTE: While we sincerely appreciate getting nominated, 30A's Beach Happy Cafe in WaterColor was excluded from this poll to help ensure fairness.]

7. BREAKFAST / BRUNCH

WINNER: Donut Hole
2nd Place: Crackings
3rd Place: Black Bear Bread Co.

8. SWEETS (BAKERY, ICE CREAM, CANDY)

WINNER: Blue Mountain Beach Creamery
2nd Place: La Crema
3rd Place: Pecan Jacks Ice Cream & Candy

[NOTE: While we sincerely appreciate getting nominated, 30A's Beach Happy Cafe in WaterColor was excluded from this poll to help ensure fairness.]

9. SEAFOOD

WINNER: Old Florida Fish House
2nd Place: Shunk Gulley Oyster Bar
3rd Place: Stinky's Fish Camp

10. RAW OYSTERS

WINNER: Shunk Gulley Oyster Bar
2nd Place: Hurricane Oyster Bar
3rd Place: The Citizen

11. SUSHI / ASIAN / INDIAN CUISINE

WINNER: O-Ku Alys Beach
2nd Place: Basmati's Asian Cuisine
3rd Place: Old Florida Fish House

12. ITALIAN

WINNER: Mimmo's 30A Ristorante Italiano
2nd Place: Borago
3rd Place: amici 30A Italian Kitchen



13. PIZZA

WINNER: Pizza by the Sea
 2nd Place: Grace Pizza and Shakes 30A
 3rd Place: amici 30A Italian Kitchen

14. MEXICAN / LATIN CUISINE

WINNER: Red Fish Taco
 2nd Place: amigos 30A Mexican Kitchen
 3rd Place: Los Rancheros

15. BURGERS

WINNER: Pickles Burgers & Milkshakes
 2nd Place: Papa Surf Burger Bar
 3rd Place: Idyll Hound Proper

16. HOTTEST NEW RESTAURANT

(Opened In 2024)
WINNER: O-Ku Alys Beach
 2nd Place: Friends 30A Burger Bar
 3rd Place: BrickTop's, Grand Boulevard

17. VEGAN & GLUTEN FREE

WINNER: Raw & Juicy
 2nd Place: Blue Mountain Bakery
 3rd Place: George's at Alys Beach

18. BEER

WINNER: Idyll Hounds Brewing Company
 2nd Place: Grayton Beer Taproom
 3rd Place: Growler Garage

19. WINE

WINNER: The Wine Bar, Watercolor
 2nd Place: Ambrosia 30A Prime Seafood & Steaks
 3rd Place: Cuvee 30A

20. COCKTAILS

WINNER: Daytrader Tiki Bar and Restaurant
 2nd Place: The Citizen
 3rd Place: Pescado

21. HAPPY HOUR

WINNER: Hurricane Oyster Bar
 2nd Place: Ambrosia
 3rd Place: Daytrader Tiki Bar and Restaurant

22. HOTTEST CHEF

WINNER: Chef Jim Shirley – Jim Shirley Restaurant Group
 2nd Place: Chef Francisco – Ambrosia
 3rd Place: Chef DJ McCracken – Old Florida Fish House

23. LIVE MUSIC

WINNER: Red Bar
 2nd Place: Old Florida Fish House
 3rd Place: Stinky's Bait Shack

24. HOTTEST SPOT TO WATCH THE BIG GAME

WINNER: Shades Bar & Grill
 2nd Place: The Big Chill
 3rd Place: Shunk Gulley Oyster Bar

25. HOTTEST LOCAL MUSICIAN OR BAND

WINNER: Red Bar Jazz Band
 2nd Place: Jared Herzog
 3rd Place: Dion Jones

26. ANNUAL EVENT

WINNER: 30A Songwriters Festival
 2nd Place: Digital Graffiti Festival
 3rd Place: Seaside School Half Marathon + 5K

27. HOTTEST ARTIST

WINNER: Justin Gaffery
 2nd Place: Jonah Allen
 3rd Place: Allison Wickey

28. PHOTOGRAPHER

WINNER: Jonah Allen
 2nd Place: LA free Film / Lauren Duesing
 3rd Place: Lillian Baker

29. FISHING CHARTER

WINNER: Grayton Beach Charters
 2nd Place: Florida Boy Adventures
 3rd Place: Grayton Girl Fishing Charters

30. GYM / FITNESS / WORKOUT

WINNER: Grayton Beach Fitness
 2nd Place: Studio Thirty A
 3rd Place: Camp Creek Wellness Center

31. HOTTEST SPOT TO GET PAMPERED (SPA, SALON, MASSAGE, AESTHETICS)

WINNER: Serenity by the Sea Spa
 2nd Place: Spa Pearl
 3rd Place: Vivo Spa 30A

32. GOLF COURSE

WINNER: Camp Creek Golf Course
 2nd Place: Santa Rosa Golf & Beach Club
 3rd Place: Shark's Tooth Golf Club

33. SHOPPING

WINNER: Grand Boulevard
 2nd Place: Seaside
 3rd Place: Rosemary Beach

34. CLOTHING BOUTIQUE

WINNER: Mercantile
 2nd Place: Willow + Mercer
 3rd Place: Cabana Seaside

[NOTE: While we sincerely appreciate getting nominated, 30A Gear Stores were excluded from this poll to help ensure fairness.]

35. KIDS ACTIVITY

WINNER: The Big Chill
 2nd Place: Seaside Amphitheater
 3rd Place: E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center

36. LOCAL PARK

WINNER: Grayton Beach State Park
 2nd Place: Eden Gardens State Park
 3rd Place: Topsail Hill Preserve State Park

37. HOTEL / INN

WINNER: The Pearl Hotel
 2nd Place: WaterColor Inn
 Third Place (TIE): Hotel Effie / Camp Creek Inn

38. WEDDING VENUE

WINNER: The Chapel at Seaside
 2nd Place: Eden Gardens State Park
 3rd Place: The Pearl Hotel

Big congratulations to all our 2025 Hot Spot nominees and winners! Follow 30A on Facebook (@scenic30A), Instagram (@hey30A), and YouTube (@30A) for your daily dose of BEACH HAPPY vibes and community news.

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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





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 1.7 million followers on Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, and TikTok. 30A has raised \$4 million for coastal charities, has given away 5.8 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.

30A LICENSING PARTNERS

Beach Happy Cafe in WaterColor, Florida
30A Apparel by B-Unlimited
30A Retail Stores by B-Unlimited
30A Craft Beer by Grayton Beer
30A Wine by Superb Wines
30A Electric Bikes by YOLO Board + Bike
30A Coffee by Amavida
SALTIE by 30A Premium Haircare
30A Candles by Postcards
30A Rentals by Stay Sense

30A MEDIA

30A.com
Beach Happy Magazine
30A Charity License Plates
30Arealestate.com
30Arentals.com
30Adining.com
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WATER CLOSED TO PUBLIC*



RED FLAG- HIGH HAZARD
High Surf and/or Strong Currents



YELLOW FLAG- MEDIUM HAZARD
Moderate Surf and/or Currents



GREEN FLAG- LOW HAZARD
Calm Conditions, Exercise Caution



PURPLE FLAG- STINGING MARINE LIFE
Man O' War, Jellyfish, Stingrays

For a complete guide on beach rules, visit BeachSafety.com.

**Entering the Gulf during double red flag conditions can result in a \$500 fine and criminal charges. Absence of flags does not assure safe waters. Swim at your own risk. For emergencies call or text 911.*



SOUTH WALTON
FLORIDA

MIRAMAR BEACH • SEASCAPE • SANDESTIN • DUNE ALLEN • GULF PLACE • SANTA ROSA BEACH • BLUE MOUNTAIN BEACH
GRAYTON BEACH • WATERCOLOR • SEASIDE • SEAGROVE • WATERSOUND • SEACREST • ALYS BEACH • ROSEMARY BEACH • INLET BEACH