

GULF ON A PLATE • WILDLY WHIMSICAL • SCENIC GOLF • SLO COASTLINES • WINTER COZY

BEACH HAPPY

30A

30A SONGWRITERS FESTIVAL

30A SONGWRITERS FESTIVAL

Feel the Rhythm
In Paradise

WINTER 2026 • ISSUE NO. 23



Shop & Dine in Alys Beach Town Center

ALO Alys Shoppe Barefoot Princess Charlie's Delights The Citizen
Fonville Press Market + Café George's Holiday Shop Krewe Merit Neat O-KU
Parasol Raw & Juicy Reli Title Indaco* SummerStory *Coming Soon

Water SOUND ORIGINS®

A coastal community nestled amongst nature,
yet within 3 miles of Scenic Highway 30-A



**HOMES FROM THE
\$500'S TO \$2 MILLION+**

Visit Watersound® Real Estate
for more information.

34 ORIGINS MAIN STREET, | INLET BEACH, FL 32461

[WATERSOUNDORIGINS.COM](https://watersoundorigins.com)

1.866.563.0070

SOUTH WALTON, FLORIDA



©The Watersound Company, LLC, a subsidiary of The St. Joe Company 2025. All Rights Reserved. "Watersound Origins" and "Origins" are service marks of The St. Joe Company or its affiliates. The materials and features and amenities depicted here in are based upon current development plans, which are subject to change without notice. This material shall not constitute a valid offer in any jurisdiction where prior registration is required and has not been completed. Void where prohibited by law. Equal Housing Opportunity. The St. Joe Company does not guarantee the obligations of, nor provide any warranties for unaffiliated parties who build homes or offer services in the Watersound Origins community. All parties who build homes in the Watersound Origins Community are independently owned and operated. The Watersound Club is a private club, membership in which permits Watersound Origins owners the use of the Village Commons, Lake Powell, and other facilities designated by the Club. Use of additional Club Facilities requires purchase of a separate membership upgrade. Club membership and use of the Club Facilities may be subject to application and acceptance, payment of applicable fees and dues, and membership requirements, rules and other limitations, all of which are subject to change.

Obtain the Property Report required by Federal Law and read it before signing anything. No federal agency has judged the merits or value, if any, of this property. Kentucky Registration #R-17.1 For NY Residents: THE COMPLETE OFFERING TERMS FOR THE SALE OF LOTS ARE IN THE CPS-12 APPLICATION AVAILABLE FROM SPONSOR, THE WATERSOUND COMPANY, LLC. FILE NO CP-18-0089

WATERSOUND®

Get your daily dose of beach happy.



30A
beachhappy
CAFE

Start your day the Beach Happy way with locally
loved coffee, smoothies, bites & more. Plus, shop
exclusive 30A Store merch while you sip!

WaterColor, FL | Open 7AM-6PM Daily | @beachhappycafe



For those who know this part of Florida well, Camp Creek Inn offers something rare—space to pause.

Tucked just beyond the bustle of the coast, Camp Creek Inn offers moments that feel almost private. Wildlife wanders freely, guests linger a little longer, and evenings unfold naturally. It's a reminder that the most memorable experiences are often the simplest ones.

L.V.X.
Preferred
HOTELS & RESORTS

CAMP CREEK
INN

Inlet Beach, Florida
CAMP CREEK INN.COM



©St. Joe Resort Operations, LLC 2026. All Rights Reserved. "Camp Creek" is a service mark of The St. Joe Company and used herein under license.

18

Soundtrack of 30A

How a Winter Festival Became a Cultural Force

46

The Gulf Table

Where 30A's Chefs Find Their Flavor

68

Coastal Classics

Eight Iconic Holes Where Land and Sea Meet



The 30A Store
cozy and coastal
warm layers and timeless style
crafted for life on the Gulf Coast



30AGEAR.COM @THE30ASTORE

BLUE MOUNTAIN BEACH • SEAGROVE • AMAVIDA, ROSEMARY • BEACH HAPPY CAFE, WATERCOLOR

Table of Contents

Issue 23

Winter 2026



92

28

Coastal Interlude
How to Savor 30A's
Winter Rhythm

38

Implausible Neighbors
Reimagining Wildlife
Along Scenic 30A

56

The Scenic Pause
A Coastal Escape in
San Luis Obispo County

88

After Sunset
Bonfires, Layers, and
Coastal Comfort

92

Forever, Framed
Timeless Love Stories

106

What Your Money Rents
Winter Stays on 30A



56



106



38



**SAVE
UP TO
\$25,000!**



NEW HOMES FROM THE \$300s
FLOORPLANS FOR EVERY LIFESTYLE

ENDLESS WAYS TO PLAY

From courts to clubs to concerts,
life here never skips a beat.

MORE THAN NEIGHBORS

Make lifelong friends in a
community where connection
comes naturally.

EASY LIVING, BUILT IN

Low HOA, no CDD and
zero stress – just more time
to enjoy life.

ACT NOW FOR THE BEST VALUE IN 55+ LIVING!
THE GOOD LIFE WON'T WAIT!



minto
Communities



LATITUDE MARGARITAVILLE WATERSOUND

by Minto Communities
(866) 635-7369



Obtain the Property Report required by Federal Law and read it before signing anything. No Federal agency has judged the merits or value, if any, of this property. WARNING: THE CALIFORNIA BUREAU OF REAL ESTATE HAS NOT INSPECTED, EXAMINED, OR QUALIFIED THE OFFERINGS. Latitude Margaritaville Kentucky Registration Number R-201. For NY Residents: THE COMPLETE OFFERING TERMS FOR THE SALE OF LOTS IN LATITUDE MARGARITAVILLE AT HILTON HEAD ARE IN THE OPS-12 APPLICATION AVAILABLE FROM SPONSOR: MINTO LATITUDE HH, LLC, FILE NO. CPB-002. THE COMPLETE OFFERING TERMS FOR THE SALE OF LOTS IN LATITUDE MARGARITAVILLE WATERSOUND ARE IN THE OPS-12 APPLICATION AVAILABLE FROM SPONSOR: LMW, LLC, FILE NO. CP20-0062. Pennsylvania Registration Numbers OL001170 (Latitude Margaritaville at Hilton Head) and OL001182 (Latitude Margaritaville Watersound). Latitude Margaritaville at Hilton Head and Latitude Margaritaville Watersound are registered with the Massachusetts Board of Registration of Real Estate Brokers and Salesmen, 1000 Washington Street, Suite 710, Boston, MA 02118 and with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 1700 G Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20552. This material shall not constitute a valid offer in any state where prior registration is required and has not been completed. Photographs are for illustrative purposes only and are merely representative of current development plans. Development plans, amenities, facilities, dimensions, specifications, prices and features depicted in any state renderings or otherwise described herein are approximate and subject to change without notice. ©Minto Communities, LLC 2026. All rights reserved. Content may not be reproduced, copied, altered, distributed, stored, or transferred in any form or by any means without express written permission. Latitude Margaritaville and the Latitude Margaritaville logo are trademarks of Margaritaville Enterprises, LLC and are used under license. Minto and the Minto logo are trademarks of Minto Communities, LLC and/or its affiliates. St. Joe and the St. Joe logo are trademarks of The St. Joe Company and are used under license. CGC 1393880/CGC 120919, 2026.



Notes From the Coast

A SONGWRITER ON A STAGE.
A STORY TOLD BEFORE THE SONG.
PEOPLE GATHERED, LISTENING TOGETHER.

Live music still carries something irreplaceable. And nowhere does that feel more true than here on 30A, where the coast has long served as both backdrop and amplifier for stories worth hearing.

In January 2026, the 30A Songwriters Festival enters its 17th year. What began as a simple, almost improbable idea has grown into a nationally recognized musical phenomenon, drawing artists and audiences from across the country to Florida's Gulf Coast. Each year, people build trips around it, returning for the rare experience of live music unfolding across courtyards, lawns, restaurants, intimate indoor spaces, and main stages throughout the coastal communities that make up 30A. Its legacy is rooted in the craft of songwriting, the intimacy of live performance, and the shared experience of hearing music take shape in real time.

That belief in experiences you have to show up for runs through this issue of *Beach Happy*.

The stories are grounded in lived moments. Art shaped by imagination, whimsy, and a sense of play. Food guided by the Gulf. Landscapes and photographs that feel observed, not arranged.

For those who arrive for the festival, winter on 30A offers far more than what happens on stage. We explore ten ways to experience the coast during festival week

and beyond, from uncrowded trails and sunset bonfires to galleries, golf courses, and long, unhurried drives. These are the moments that live between the headliners, often becoming the ones remembered most.

No festival is truly complete without good food. Along 30A, that means chefs taking their cues from what the Gulf provides, shaping menus around seasonality, responsibility, and a deep respect for place. Nearby, imagination takes a playful turn as art invites us to see the wildlife we share this coast with not just as scenery, but as part of the community, a reminder that wonder often comes from paying closer attention.

We widen the lens with a journey to San Luis Obispo County, California, where winter reveals a quieter, more reflective side of the Central Coast. Open roads, fog-softened mornings, vineyard afternoons, and empty beaches echo a feeling familiar to anyone who knows the Gulf Coast when it settles into a slower rhythm.

For those drawn to drama of a different kind, eight iconic golf holes take center stage, where land, sea, and strategy converge. Shaped as much by wind and water as by design, these courses remind us that some experiences are inseparable from the environments that frame them.

As the evenings cool, gathering takes on a cozier rhythm. Fire pits, blankets, extra layers, and simple comforts create



space for conversation, music, and lingering under the stars, the kind of nights that stretch just a little longer than planned.

Weddings along the Gulf are as much about the place as the celebration. This coastline has become a natural choice for couples drawn to its beauty, its familiarity, and the sense of ease it brings to the day. Through the eyes of two local photographers, we see how those moments unfold in different ways, each shaped by sensitivity to place and attention to what matters most.

At its core, this issue is about what endures. Songs that sound better when heard live. Meals shared at a table, shaped by the Gulf's generosity and the chefs who honor what it gives. Places that reward those who take the long way and stay a little longer. Experiences that can't be reproduced, only *lived*.

As a new year begins, we hope these pages encourage you to listen closely, gather warmly, and make space for the moments that stay with you long after they pass.

Beach happy, my friends.

JoAnn Ribaud
CEO, The 30A Company



A new home designed around you, with a backyard for parties and fun. Plus, an amenity center ready to enjoy life without leaving the neighborhood. The Gathering Place clubhouse features a resort-style pool and sundeck, fitness center, event lawn, pickleball and tennis courts. This gated community is just a short bike ride or drive to the adventures awaiting you along 30A and the Emerald Coast. NatureWalk by Kolter Homes is outside the ordinary, and open daily for you to explore.



NATUREWALK
at the WATERSOUND ORIGINSSM COMMUNITY

MODELS OPEN DAILY | Tour designer-decorated models in-person or online
New Homes from the \$500s to \$1M+ | 850-613-8088 | NatureWalkWatersound.com



©2025 Kolter Homes. Prices, features, dimensions, amenities, special offers and product offerings are subject to change without notice. CFC057817/OGG1614916
"Watersound OriginsSM" is a registered service mark of The St. Joe Company and used under license.

KOLTERHOMESSM

BEACH HAPPY



Cover image courtesy of Nathan Zucker.

Editor-in-Chief
Amandeep Mangat

Art Director
David Coffey

Writers
Lauren Sage Reinlie, Martin Liptrot,
Carrie Honaker, Geoff Nudelman,
and Karina Caraballo.

Photographers
Nathan Zucker, Shelly Swanger,
Lynn Crow, Rick Diamond, Troy
Ruprecht, Jim Clark, Brenna Kneiss,
Dawn Whitty, Lauren Duesing/ LA
Free Film, Gannett Creative House,
Sean Murphy, Chase Yakaboski, Danna
Dykstra-Coy, Brittney App, Steven
Mangum, Refuge & Co., and Jeff Marsh.

Design Contributor
Emiliano Neri

Brand Ambassador
Ragan Smith

Advertising Sales Director
Cory Davis

Advertising Inquiries
advertising@30A.com

Get in Touch
feedback@30A.com

Publisher
The 30A Company, LLC
755 Grand Blvd Suite B-105, #352
Miramar Beach, Florida USA 32550

30A.com
beachhappymag.com

© The 30A Company, LLC
30A®, Beach Happy®, and Waste Time
Wisely® are Registered Trademarks
Beach Happy® magazine is published by The 30A
Company, LLC. No portion of this publication may
be reproduced or copied, in whole or in part, without
the express written permission from the publisher.
The editorial and advertising information within
this magazine is deemed correct to the best of the
publishing company's knowledge and is subject to
change without notice. All photos, information, and
editorial within the pages—in print, electronic or
other version—of Beach Happy magazine are used
with the implied consent of those advertisers, writers,
photographers, agencies, and individuals providing
them. In any such case arising where materials,
copy, or photographs were provided to Beach Happy
magazine, The 30A Company, or any writer or
freelance provider without the provider holding or
obtaining the rights to such item, the magazine, and/
or staff and publisher are not liable. Should any such
case arise, said person providing copy, information, or
photography will defend, indemnify, and hold Beach
Happy magazine and The 30A Company harmless from
and against loss, expense or other liability resulting
from any claims or suits for violation of privacy,
plagiarism, libel, copyright or trademark infringement.

Cayucos at Sunset
San Luis Obispo County, California
PHOTO: Danna Dykstra-Coy



Escape to 30A.

Stay For The Memories.

30AESCAPES.COM — 850.608.1384



SCAN
ME!

At 30A Escapes, Luxury Isn't Just Where You Stay — IT'S HOW IT FEELS.

Our hand-selected homes in Rosemary Beach, Seagrove, Grayton Beach, and WaterColor set the stage for effortless days and unforgettable nights, from morning bike rides and barefoot afternoons on the sand to story-filled evenings by the Gulf. With peak weeks filling fast and summer on the horizon, now is the time to experience 30A as it was meant to be — *Refined. Relaxed. and Unforgettable.*



BEACH HAPPY Team



I've lived along 30A for more than 25 years and built my life around the coastal lifestyle I love. With a strong background in the apparel business, I bring both style and entrepreneurial experience to our brand. I'm passionate about all things outdoors—especially fly fishing, golf, and a lively game of pickleball. I live in the area with my wife, Kajsa Larsson, and together we 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



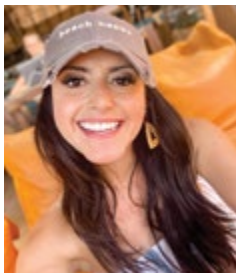
Hailing from the vibrant city of New Orleans and now residing in North East Alabama, my fondest memories involve vacationing on Florida's Gulf Coast beaches. Embarking on my design journey quite some time ago, I've been privileged to work across a spectrum of genres and platforms. With time, my expertise 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 23 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
Sales Director



Contributors



1 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.



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 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 geoffnudemlan.com.

4 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.

5 KARINA CARABALLO
is a freelance designer and marketing creative with deep roots along the Florida Panhandle. She brings a distinctly coastal perspective to branding, real estate, and visual storytelling. When she is not crafting campaigns, she can usually be found soaking up beach life or chasing the perfect sunset photo.

6 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.



OVERSEE

WE MANAGE THE DETAILS.
SO HOMEOWNERS CAN RELAX.
AND RENTERS UNWIND.



30A SONG WRITERS FESTIVAL



30A'S *Signature Festival*

PHOTO: Shelly Swanger

**URNS THE BEACH INTO A NATIONAL STAGE
FOR MUSIC, MEMORY, AND MEANING**

By Lauren Sage Reinlie



Brothers of a Feather
PHOTO: Shelly Swanger



PHOTO: Shelly Swanger



John Prine
PHOTO: Nathan Zucker



Mavis Staples
PHOTO: Lynn Crow

In the fall of 2009, a few friends gave longtime local and event producer Jennifer Steele an idea: Florida’s Scenic Highway 30A should host a music festival. She developed the concept and pitched it to the board of the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA), where she had recently been named the director. It could be held in the winter, a time when the then-lightly populated stretch of beach was all but deserted. It would draw musicians and music lovers to the area during the slow season and serve as a fundraiser for the CAA. With no major music venue in the region, the artists could play at pop-up stages at restaurants and bars along the 19-mile stretch of Scenic Highway 30A, a coastal road and string of beach towns along Florida’s Gulf Coast.

The following January, a motley crew of headstrong volunteers pulled it off. They enticed more than 80 artists, including nationally renowned

This year's festival, to be held January 16 to 19, 2026, will span 30 venues and feature more than 125 artists, including headliners Mavis Staples, *I’m With Her*, *Toad the Wet Sprocket*, and *10,000 Maniacs*. With the festival’s increasing popularity and more people discovering the perks of visiting 30A in the cooler months, the area’s shoulder season has all but disappeared. The festival has become the primary fundraiser for groundbreaking arts and cultural events year-round.

"I wish we could say we had some type of 20-year plan, but we really just had a group of passionate people," said Russell Carter, who co-produces the festival with Steele. "That first year, we pulled it off and were happy everyone had a good time. It wasn't until the second year that we really started to see the potential."

Where It All Began

These days, when a popular tune is created by purchasing a song, recording it, producing it, and pumping it out to the masses via social media, the songwriters behind the music are often the unsung heroes of the hits. The 30A Songwriters Festival set out to celebrate those writers and anyone whose craft involves taking a blank space in the world and filling it with sound and story. While the main stage can accommodate thousands, most venues hold between 200 and 1,000 guests, offering a far more intimate concert-going experience.

"Songwriters are the heart and soul of the music industry," Carter said. "In our minds, it's a profound experience to walk into a venue with 200 people up close and personal and hear an artist who has written a song tell the story of why they wrote it, what it means to them, and then hear them perform it."

This vision was what pulled the volunteers together that first year. A nearby festival, the Frank Brown Songwriters Festival, held each October in Orange Beach, Alabama, provided some inspiration. After some friends invited Steele to attend, she could see the potential for something similar in the 30A area, bringing world-class musicians to some of the world’s most beautiful beaches.



Russell Carter, Jennifer Steele and Rodney Crowell
PHOTO: Rick Diamond

songwriters like the Indigo Girls, Rodney Crowell, and Jeffrey Steele, one of Nashville's hottest songwriters at the time. They created stages at a dozen locations, most of which did not exist before, including a makeshift main stage overlooking the dunes in Alys Beach. The 30A Songwriters Festival was born.

That first year, 800 tickets were sold. Seventeen years later, over 5,000 people attend each year, and the festival is stronger than ever, hosting major acts, longtime favorites, and rising stars. Artists come from varied backgrounds, including country, folk, blues, Americana, jazz, R&B, and alternative rock.



Paul McDonald
PHOTO: Shelly Swanger

“
Songwriters are the
heart and soul
of the music industry.
”



PHOTO: Nathan Zucker



Brandi Carlile
PHOTO: Nathan Zucker

In just two months, Steele and the volunteers, learning on the job in a labor of love, hobbled together a modest budget of \$8,000, gathered a roster of performers, sold the concept to local restaurants and major resorts in the area, marketed it to fans, schlepped tickets, and organized how it would all come together at showtime.

One of the group's first calls was to Russell Carter, who owns his own artist management company and represents Shawn Mullins, a highly respected singer-songwriter in the folk community. Carter happened to be vacationing in Grayton Beach at the time.

He was intrigued and offered to meet for coffee. "I just happened to be in the right place at the right time, vacationing," Russell said.

He recalls meeting the group in Seaside and could immediately see their passion and the individual strengths they brought to the table. He also thought he might have something to throw

into the ring, with more than 25 years of experience in the music industry, representing and managing musicians. Having caught the bug, he started calling in favors to artists he knew, selling them on the concept of playing at a secluded beach in the dead of winter.

The team ended up lining up more than 80 artists to play on 12 stages across the area at venues that mostly didn't have any stages to begin with.

"Everybody who jumped in and helped did it with enthusiasm and with a sense of purpose," Carter said. "The local sound companies threw everything they could into transforming bars and restaurants into cool little venues."

Finding the Rhythm

There was a learning curve. At Fish out of Water in WaterColor, the staff brought out their fine wine glasses for the festival. "We broke about half," Carter said. The following year, they converted to plastic.

The temporary stage constructed at Alys Beach for the *Indigo Girls* was beautiful, but unexpectedly strong, frigid winds blew Gulf water over the dunes and onto the equipment. The band delayed the show, huddled up in coats and scarves, but eventually threw off their gloves and played anyway to an ecstatic crowd. Today, main acts perform on a professionally constructed stage at Grand Boulevard, which can accommodate up to 6,000 people.

The first year's check-in and box office were held in a 200-square-foot hallway in Seaside, squeezed between the elevator and staircase.

"That's just hilarious to me now," Steele recalled. Today, the box office is housed in a massive tent at Marina Park in WaterColor, complete with computer stations, a merch section, and a lounge featuring a cocktail bar.

Robin Beans volunteered that first year and has worked the artist check-in ever since. Every time an artist came to check

in, she would run outside, around the corner to The Rep Theatre, to grab their supplies. She brought her own snacks to share with the artists.

The festival was a success. Several major resorts in the area reported festival weekend sales that exceeded their totals for the first few months of the year. From there, the festival kept growing—drawing more fans, bigger headliners, and even more economic activity to the area.

"All of a sudden, the dead month became a very active and profitable business. Sixteen years later, it's hard to even see traces of a shoulder season anymore," Carter said.

Where Art Pays Off

By 2019—the last year the Walton County Tourist Development Council gathered this data—the group found that what had once been a little beachside festival was generating over \$8 million in economic impact. That number has only grown in the years since, Steele said. "The festival is a perfect example that

investing in art and culture is actually a sound financial decision. There's a big payoff," Carter said. "Nobody goes into the arts thinking, let's make a lot of money for the community, but they should. Because it works."

The Cultural Arts Alliance has grown along with the festival. It now produces groundbreaking arts programming, including the country's only Underwater Museum of Art, a prison art initiative, dozens of festivals and events, and year-round programs for both kids and adults. When the festival began, the organization had just one part-time staff member. Today, it employs a team of eleven.

"We wouldn't be where we are without the Songwriters Festival. It's at the core of the CAA's growth," Steele said. "We wouldn't have the strengths we have today—the budget, the visibility, or the interest from national artists to come here."

From Openers to Icons

Now, when Carter calls artists about

attending the festival, everyone already knows about it and the 30A area in general, he said. Usually, the artists call him.

They've landed some major acts over the years, including Tanya Tucker, Brian Wilson of *The Beach Boys*, Jackson Browne, John Prine, Lyle Lovett, Emmylou Harris, Graham Nash, Lucinda Williams, and *Cheap Trick*.

Plenty of newcomers also play the festival each year, often tucked into lineups at smaller venues, and many have seen their careers take off since. Brandi Carlile played in 2019 as she was quickly becoming a nationally recognized artist. Jason Isbell played the festival as a relatively unknown artist when he launched his solo career after his run with the Southern rock band *Drive-by Truckers*. When he returned several years later, he was a headliner, having become one of Americana's most acclaimed songwriters and a three-time Grammy winner.

This year, Nikki Lane and Paul McDonald, both of whom started in



Jason Isbell
PHOTO: Troy Ruprecht



John Prine
PHOTO: Jim Clark

small venues during earlier years of the festival, will open for headliners on the main stage. And perhaps the biggest rise: Meghan Trainor, the high schooler who came down years ago with her mother to play guitar and perform her original songs, is now a household name and chart-topping pop powerhouse.

The festival has created countless special memories for everyone involved. When Prine played in 2020, he was 73. He performed on the main stage, but he also played a smaller show, and it was a rare moment that Steele was able to sit still and listen to an entire performance. "I was pinching myself and crying a little bit, smiling and laughing. It was just so special."

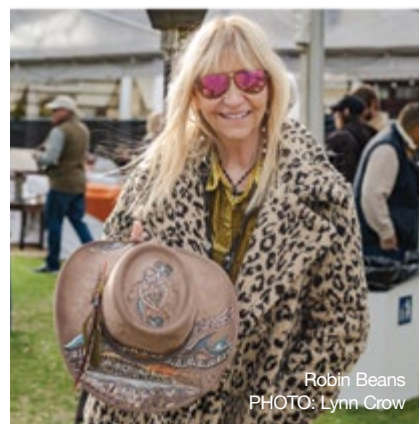
Less than three months later, Prine passed away from complications from COVID, making the performance at the 30A Songwriters Festival one of his last.

One of Carter's favorite moments, among many, was seeing Jackson Browne, an artist he grew up listening to. "I taught myself guitar by playing his songs." In 2016, at 67, he agreed to play the festival and decided to turn it into a small tour. He pulled up to the main stage with a truck and trailer and unloaded a collection of guitars and a grand piano. He played solo acoustic, moving between guitars and the piano for each song. "He played every great hit... I mean every single one of them. It was just a phenomenal concert," Carter recalled. "It was jam-packed, and everyone was just enthralled from start to finish."

Feels Like Home

Mavis Staples, a legendary singer from a legendary musical family, will perform at this year's festival at 86. For the first time, a Friday afternoon kickoff event will be held at the Seaside Amphitheater, featuring Margo Price. In addition to the headliners, other artists of note include Benmont Tench, the keyboard player from *Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers*, Amy Helm (Levon Helm's daughter), Jonatha Brooke, and Joseph Arthur.

While every year gets smoother in some ways, Steele said, there are still always plenty of unexpected twists to navigate.



Robin Beans
PHOTO: Lynn Crow

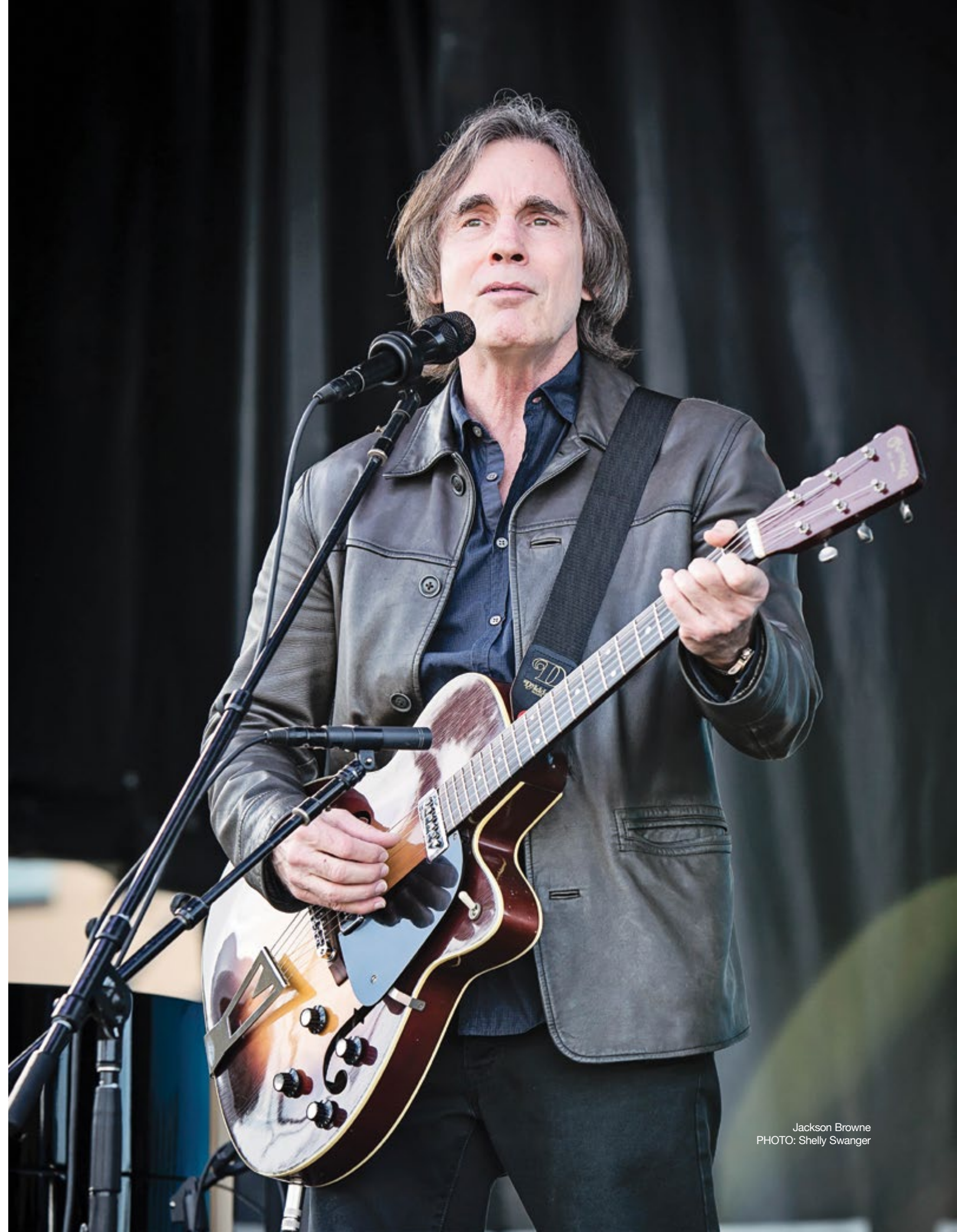
Coordinating the main stage is one thing, but with 30 other venues needing lighting, sound, security, and staffing, it's a significant undertaking. And organizing the schedule, coordinating several shows per artist across venues in the area, and trying to figure out how to make it all come together require plenty of late nights for Carter and Steele, who have since married. "I'll keep at the schedule for long hours until I can't take it anymore, and then Jennifer will come in and help me make sense of it again," Carter said. When asked about working together, the two joked they shouldn't talk about it, but agreed that each brings a unique skill set to make it happen.

Even though she's moved away, Robin Beans, the longtime volunteer, will return to artist check-in this year. "I'm never leaving unless they kick me out or I become too old to do this," the 69-year-old said. She labors all week preparing, then takes pride in being one of the first faces the artists see.

Many of the artists who play the festival return year after year. Beans said she knows they love the beautiful beaches, but she's also heard that other festivals just aren't as friendly. Each year, some of the same faces return to help make the festival the best it can be.

A getaway in the dead of winter has become a beloved tradition for both fans and the artists performing for them. "I try hard each year to make it feel like a welcome back," Beans said. "A welcome home." 🍷

Stay in tune with this year's artists, updates, and ticket info at 30ASongwritersFestival.com.



Jackson Browne
PHOTO: Shelly Swanger

10 WAYS

to Soak Up 30A's Winter Rhythm and Coastal Charm During Festival Week

By Lauren Sage Reinlie



Alo Yoga at Alys Beach
PHOTO: Brenna Kneiss

In town for the 30A Songwriters Festival? Lucky you. January is one of the most unexpectedly magical times to visit 30A, and not just because of the music. While thousands flock here each winter for four days of unforgettable performances, the magic doesn't stop when the last song fades. Whether you're arriving early, staying late, or just looking to fill the hours between sets, there's a quieter rhythm to January along Florida's Scenic Highway 30A that's worth leaning into.

The beaches are uncrowded and cooler weather makes it the perfect time to explore everything this stretch of the Gulf Coast has to offer, from beach bonfires and backwoods drives to art galleries and glass art workshops.

Here are 10 things to do on 30A in January that will keep you soaking up the spirit of the coast, long after the encore.



1. FOUR-WHEEL FOREST DRIVES
With the right four-wheel-drive vehicle, January is a perfect time to explore the trails. Point Washington State Forest spans roughly 15,000 acres in Santa Rosa Beach, with a network of driving trails winding through sandy pine woods. Keep your eyes peeled for wildlife, especially in the early morning. The golden hour before sunset is just as stunning, casting a warm glow through the trees.

Four wheel drive adventure through Point Washington State Forest
PHOTO: Dawn Whitty



Pirates on stage and fishing on the bay deliver classic coastal adventure.

2.

HIKING AND BIKING

Cooler temperatures make this a perfect time to explore the area's scenic trails. Spot deer, foxes, osprey, or even a gopher tortoise while wandering through the sandy forests.

Topsail Hill State Park is a great place to start. Explore 15 miles of trails through longleaf pine forests, around rare coastal dune lakes, and across pristine dunes that lead to a stretch of untouched beach.

Just across Scenic Highway 30A from Grayton Beach State Park's entrance is the trailhead for a 4.5-mile hike through the park. The trail winds through the forest to Western Lake, another of the area's rare coastal dune lakes.

Point Washington State Forest also offers several excellent trails through the sandy pine woods, perfect for hiking. The Eastern Lake Trail System features 3.5-, 5-, and 10-mile loops. The Longleaf Greenway runs for eight miles. McQuage Bayou Trail includes both a six-mile and a four-mile loop.

Biking trails wind through pine forests and coastal dunes, offering an easy way to explore the area.



Friends gather around a beach bonfire as the sun sets along the coast.
PHOTO: LA Free Film

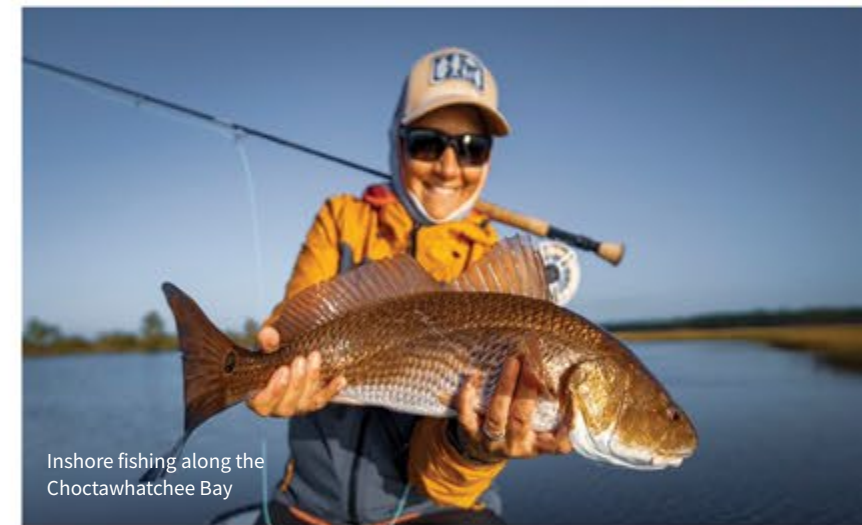
3.

BEACH SUNSETS AND BONFIRES

The sun sets around 5 p.m. this time of year, and while it may be too cool to swim, the hour around sunset is a stunning time to be on the beach. It's also conveniently timed for happy hour.

Beach bonfires are a perfect way to enjoy the coast during the cooler months. Gather with friends and family by the fire, roast marshmallows, and enjoy the soothing sand, waves, and wide-open night skies. Bonfire permits are required. Several local companies provide full-service bonfire setups, including proper permits, beach chairs, tables, s'mores fixings, coolers, and more.

Beach bonfires require permits, and rules and approved setups are subject to change, so visitors should always confirm current requirements before planning.



Inshore fishing along the Choctawhatchee Bay

4.

INSHORE FISHING

The Gulf is a hotspot for offshore fishing, especially in the warmer months. Still, anglers should not overlook Choctawhatchee Bay, a 30-mile-long estuary that runs from Fort Walton Beach to Santa Rosa Beach. In January, this shallow, mostly protected waterway teems with redfish, speckled trout, black drum, and sheepshead, all of which thrive in the brackish blend of fresh and salt water.

5.

FAMILY FUN

When it's too chilly to play outside, the area offers several indoor activities for all ages and interests.

For budding or full-fledged gamers, local arcades deliver plenty of action.

Top picks include Dave & Buster's in Panama City Beach and Thrills Laser Tag and Arcade at Seascape in Miramar Beach. Also in Miramar, Rainforest Black Light Putt-Putt and Arcade features a full 18-hole indoor course. At Escapology, also in Miramar, choose from six mysteries to solve with your own private group of kids or adults.

For curious elementary-age kids, WonderWorks in Panama City Beach offers more than 100 indoor interactive exhibits, including science experiments, optical illusions, and puzzles to solve.

For a one-of-a-kind family experience, Dolly Parton's team recently opened Pirate Voyage Dinner & Show in Panama City Beach. The production features acrobatic pirates and mermaids, a lagoon with a full-size pirate ship, live animals, music, and dancing. It's boisterous fun that's sure to spark plenty of sword fights and swashbuckling for days to come.

To get the wiggles out, U.S. Gold Gymnastics locations in Santa Rosa Beach and Miramar Beach open their gyms on Fridays for supervised free play. Stop in for plenty of bouncing, sliding, jumping, swinging, and flipping. Two sessions are offered. In the morning, adults can bring little ones up to 5 years old. In the evening, from 6:15 to 9:00 p.m., children ages 5 to 10 can be dropped off for supervised play, games, and snacks.

High energy acrobatics and swashbuckling stunts bring the pirate themed dinner show to life.



6.

GOLFING

Several public courses wind through some of the area's most beautiful coastal landscapes. In January, courses are less crowded, and the mild weather makes it an ideal time to walk.

Three courses are open to the public at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort. The visually stunning Raven Golf Club, a par 71 course, is carved through marshes, wetlands, and pine forest. Baytowne Golf Club offers several options, perfect for golfers of all skill levels. And Links Golf Club is a classic links-style option with game-changing challenges and spectacular views of the Choctawhatchee Bay.

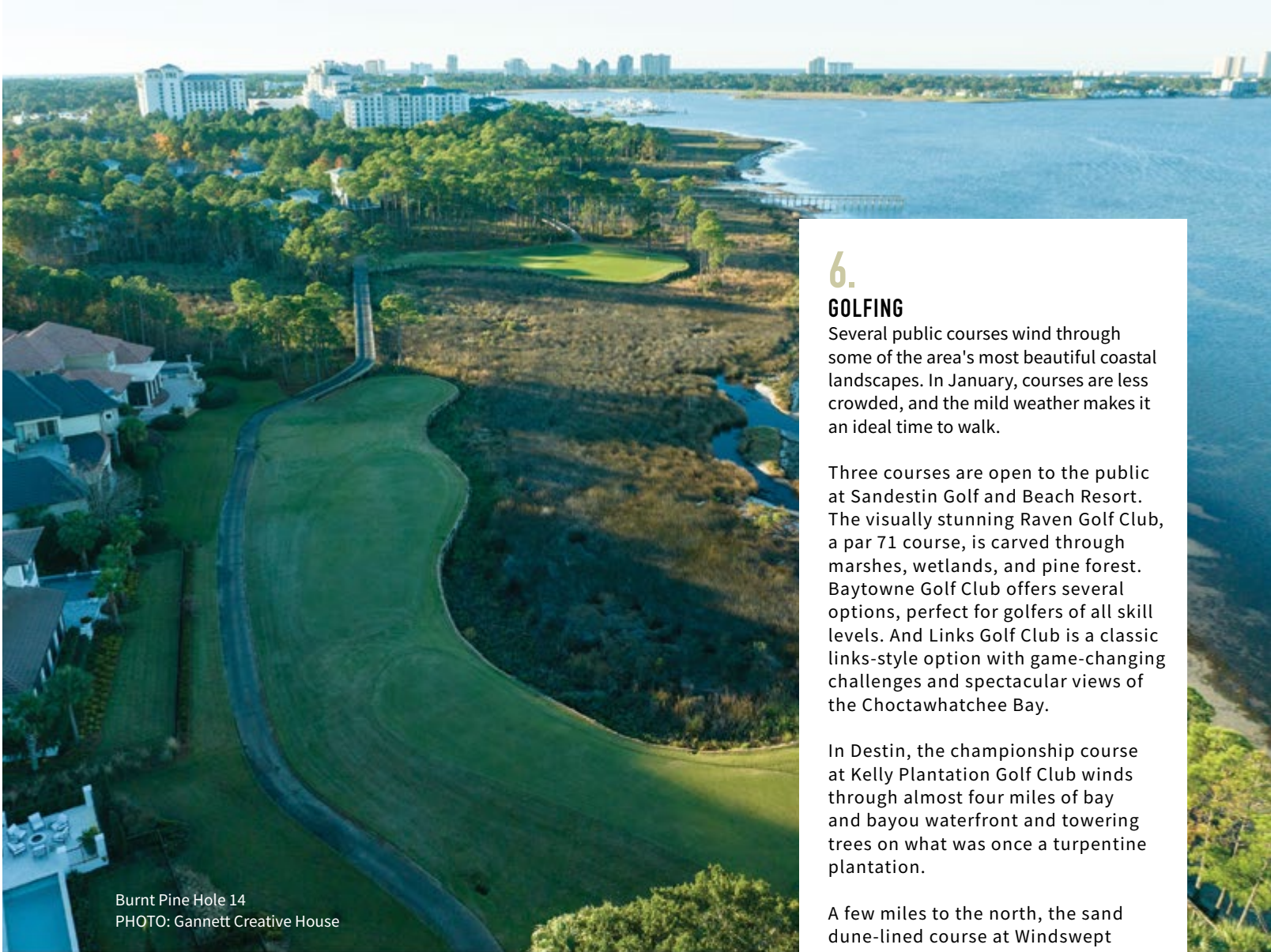
In Destin, the championship course at Kelly Plantation Golf Club winds through almost four miles of bay and bayou waterfront and towering trees on what was once a turpentine plantation.

A few miles to the north, the sand dune-lined course at Windswept Dunes in Freeport spans over 700 peaceful acres off the beaten path. If it's too cold, or dark, to be out, Back Nine Indoor Golf Simulator in Miramar has bays available 24 hours a day

7.

PICKLEBALL AND TENNIS

Many local resorts have their own tennis and pickleball courts, but a few public options are available, too. South Walton Sports Complex has eight pickleball courts, available at no charge. Hidden Dunes Tennis and Pickleball Center offers five clay tennis courts and five pickleball courts for rent, along with daily clinics, match arranging, ball machine rentals, and more. Bayside Pickleball Club is an indoor, all-ages facility with daily open play, clinics, and court reservations.



Burnt Pine Hole 14
PHOTO: Gannett Creative House



Pickleball courts at Camp Creek Inn

8.

ART GALLERIES

Over the past decade, the 30A area has flourished with artists and new ways to experience the arts. Here are just a few standouts:

Susan Foster Gallery in Miramar Beach is a collective led by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County. The gallery features works of more than 30 local artists, with about a dozen new artists showcased each season. Celebrated local artist Justin Gaffrey has a gallery in Blue Mountain Beach that showcases his distinctive, textured, sculptural paintings. In Grayton Beach, Ria Leigh Gallery is one of the newest additions to the scene. It features coastal-themed pieces, local artwork, and works by both regional and national artists.

Fusion Art Glass and Fine Jewelry began 30 years ago in a tiny Seaside shop. Today, at its expanded location, it showcases handcrafted treasures from more than 150 small-studio artists and is now a regional leader in glass art. Adaro Art, located at The Hub 30A near Watersound, features work by local artist Francisco Adaro alongside more than a dozen other unique, contemporary talents. For more glass art, The Shard Shop in Grayton Beach offers daily hands-on workshops where visitors can create their own pieces.



Artist Justin Gaffrey
in his studio
PHOTO: Sean Murphy



Picnic at Eden Gardens State Park



Retail therapy at 30Avenue, a
premier lifestyle venue on 30A

9.

HISTORIC TOUR

Step back in time at Eden Gardens State Park. For something indoors, tour the historic Wesley House and learn how Point Washington, one of the area's earliest settlements, was built around a sawmill in the late 1800s. Cypress logs were harvested across the bay and floated down to the mill, providing a livelihood for the small community that formed around it. Stroll through the gardens and down to the bayou to see remnants of the old dock, where steamships once loaded planks of wood bound for Pensacola, or venture through the adjacent neighborhood to spot some of the most historic homes in the area.

10.

SHOPPING

For outdoor shopping strolls, 30A has plenty to offer. Browse charming boutiques and coastal shops at Rosemary Beach, Alys Beach, 30Avenue, The Hub, Seaside, WaterColor, and Grand Boulevard.

The 30A Company has four locations: Blue Mountain Beach, WaterColor (30A's Beach Happy Cafe), Rosemary Beach, and Seagrove Beach. Each store offers a curated collection of apparel, accessories, and home goods inspired by the laid-back elegance of life on 30A.

Ocean-Inspired Luxury for HEALTHY HAIR AND SCALP



Learn more
and save 20%
@SaltieBy30A f i d
saltiebeauty.com



WINTER LOOKS GOOD ON THE COAST



DISCOVER YOUR PLACE ON THE COAST.

While others escape winter, we embrace it. Slower mornings, barefoot afternoons, and moments made to be shared - this is 30A at its best!

At The Agency Northwest Florida Beaches, we connect buyers, sellers, and agents to a coastal lifestyle designed for them — from Perdido Key to 30A.

THEAGENCYNWFL.COM | 800.277.0801

BUY. SELL. LEASE.

THE IMPLAUSIBLE CREATURES OF 30A

Where Imagination, Wildlife, and Art Come Together
Along Florida's Most Magical Coastline

By Martin Liptrot

Dane Howard is an artist and creator whose work spans the full creative spectrum, from paint to pixels. A classically trained painter, he studied at the ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena before joining the California Impressionist Society. From there, he made his way to Silicon Valley, where he helped shape digital branding and product design for major international companies.

Now based in Tennessee, he calls himself a re-emerging artist. He blends the traditional with the digital, the whimsical with the meaningful. He remains fascinated by technology, especially the potential of generative AI, but he is equally inspired by the scent of oils and canvas, the stroke of a physical brush, and the quiet magic that happens when you mix both worlds together.

And somewhere in that space between old and new, between play and purpose, an idea took shape.

While on a family vacation along Scenic Highway 30A in Northwest Florida, exploring beach towns like Alys Beach, Seaside, and Grayton, Dane was struck not only by the region's natural beauty and upscale coastal charm, but also by the quiet presence of wildlife living in step with the steady rhythm of tourism. From birds in the dune grasses to raccoons rifling through trash bins, the animals of 30A were always present, though often unnoticed or misunderstood.

What if, Dane wondered, these animals weren't just living around



Dane Howard



Scan here to pre-order
the book and posters.



“Often, we respond to wildlife with fear or unfamiliarity. But what if we responded with empathy, with curiosity, or even with humor?”

us, but with us? What if they were more than occasional sightings in the periphery? What if they had jobs, routines, even personalities? What if they were part of the community?

That implausible idea became the seed for *The Implausible Creatures of 30A*. It was an unlikely thought, but one that felt creatively full of possibility.

Back in the studio, Dane let his imagination run wild. Using his skills in visual storytelling and digital design, he began developing what would become *Implausible Creatures*—not one or two, but fifty fully realized characters, each with its own personality, role, and story.

“There’s Barry the Bear who works as a shaved ice attendant,” Dane said. “He’s a black bear in a classic 1950s soda jerk uniform, serving one of 30A’s favorite treats to locals and visitors alike.”

Then there’s Harriet the Heron, a crossing guard with a wingspan wide enough to stop traffic. Red Hawk Hank

patrols the beach in Truman, the iconic 30A sand rover and beloved brand mascot, scanning the shoreline for mariners in distress or beachgoers who leave their trash behind.

Ronnie the Raccoon drives the shuttle in Grayton Beach during the day, and at night, takes on traffic calming and parking patrol. Franny the Frog runs a beachside glass-blowing studio. Baxter the Bobcat inspects recycling bins on Rosemary Beach, sorting plastics and cans with judgmental flair. Al the Alligator? He owns a pool-cleaning business, of course.

The characters are whimsical, but they are not hollow. There is heart and purpose woven into every design. Each creature offers a gentle invitation to see the world differently, to notice what is around us, and to consider the animals we share space with not only as wildlife, but as neighbors.

These wildly implausible ideas found their first audience at the 2025 Digital Graffiti Festival in Alys Beach, where Dane’s AI-enhanced creations were transformed into large-

One of Dane Howard’s *Implausible Creatures* comes to life on the walls of Alys Beach at the 2025 Digital Graffiti Festival.





scale projections that danced across the town's iconic white facades. The exhibit was a hit. Locals and visitors stopped in their tracks, drawn in by the visuals and curious about the stories behind the creatures.

That curiosity now has a new home in book form. *Implausible Creatures of 30A*, currently available for pre-order, is a richly illustrated collection designed to entertain, educate, and spark conversations among families, nature lovers, and curious readers of all ages.

JoAnn Ribaud, CEO of The 30A Company, was among those moved by Dane's work when it debuted at Digital Graffiti. "His art quite literally stopped me in my tracks," she said. "What struck me most was how he reimagined the creatures we share our coastal home with, not just as wildlife, but as neighbors with stories and purpose." For Ribaud, *Implausible Creatures of 30A* is more than a playful collection of characters. It is a reminder that 30A is not just a destination, but a living, breathing community where imagination can deepen our sense of place and where wonder can inspire stewardship.

Dane sees the book as more than a creative exercise. It is a playful tool for environmental awareness and a way to reframe how we view the animals of 30A. Rather than seeing them as intrusions or curiosities, he invites us to view them as vital participants in the ecosystems we live within.

"Ideally, I hope the book starts conversations between families about nature," Dane explained. "It's entertaining, yes, but





Each creature offers a gentle invitation to see the world differently, to notice what is around us, and to consider the animals we share space with not only as wildlife, but as neighbors.

it also gently challenges our perspective. Often, we respond to wildlife with fear or unfamiliarity. But what if we responded with empathy, with curiosity, or even with humor?”

A portion of the proceeds from the book and its limited-edition art posters will support South Walton Turtle Watch. This is a nod to the very real animals that inspired the fictional universe, and five percent of all sales will go toward helping protect the turtles that return to these beaches each season. Their quiet presence plays an essential role in maintaining the balance of life along the Gulf.

At its core, *Implausible Creatures* is a celebration of joy, imagination, and the wonder found in the wild. It encourages us to see the world with a bit more whimsy and a bit more heart.

Pre-orders for *The Implausible Creatures of 30A* are now open at danehoward-studio.com. For families looking to deepen their connection with 30A, it offers more than beautiful artwork. It is a keepsake, a conversation starter, and a reminder that the beach is full of stories, if we are willing to look a little closer.

If the magic of 30A lives in the space between Gulf and sky, then Dane Howard's *Implausible Creatures* live in the space between the real and the imagined. It is a place where anything feels possible, and everything feels connected.

The idea might be implausible, but the joy, the wonder, and the deeper message it carries could not be more real. 🐾

Discover more of the journey on Instagram at [@implausible_creatures](https://www.instagram.com/implausible_creatures) and [@danehoward_studio](https://www.instagram.com/danehoward_studio).



Table Salt

How the Gulf Shapes 30A's Chefs, Menus, and Culinary Imagination

By Carrie Honaker

Along Scenic Highway 30A, the coastal stretch of towns on Florida's Emerald Coast, the rhythm of the Gulf shapes everything—what's hauled in at dawn, what goes on the plate by evening, even how chefs dream up tomorrow's menus. In kitchens tucked behind white-sand dunes and surf-sprayed patios, a shared philosophy connects them: Cook with what the coast gives you, honor the flavors of the moment, and make people feel something.

Bud & Alley's



Seagar's



Saladita Taqueria



Chef Nikhil Abuvala

Ingredients Lead the Way

At Saladita Taqueria, that ethos starts with smoke, corn, and heat. Tortillas made by hand puff on the griddle the instant you order them, and cabbage crackles with lime and pickling brine. For chef and owner Nikhil Abuvala, restraint is its own kind of creativity. “When we’re cooking, ingredients come first, and you’ve got to have good ingredients. Our Gulf Coast has them, so let’s use them,” he said.

That’s why you’ll see scamp, golden tile, or triggerfish before anything flown from thousands of miles away. Even the greens—bok choy, tender lettuces, crisp cabbage—arrive from small farms in Chipley or micro-plots scattered from Louisiana to Alabama. “We lean heavily on our farm collective JV Foods for

really beautiful produce, and we let that drive the menu along with the bounty of fresh Gulf fish,” said Abuvala.

The Tuna Crispy Rice at Daytrader Tiki Bar delivers the perfect crunch beneath melt-in-your-mouth tuna, finished with a creamy honey-chili aioli that mirrors the sweet heat of a Gulf afternoon. And his cobia on the current Roux 30A menu stands out: a fillet coated in a macadamia-nut-and-corn-flake crust that adds a buttery crackle to every bite.



Chef Fleetwood Covington

The Gulf in Translation

Across the scenic byway, other chefs feel the same gravitational pull toward Gulf abundance. At Seagar’s Prime Steaks & Seafood, Chef Fleetwood Covington starts each day with the salty immediacy of the docks. For him, cooking here equals responsibility: honoring seasons, choosing sustainability, and showcasing what many inland diners never get to taste at its freshest. “I’m responsible for vocalizing where we live and championing what we can pull out of the Gulf,” said Covington. When the first cold front brushes Destin, he shifts instinctively. Out come warmer, cozier plates, like his childhood-inspired blackened grouper nestled against tomato bisque, charred vegetables, and beluga lentils.

At Shaka, the energy shifts yet again—bright, surf-culture casual, but with a deep reverence for craft. Here, chef James Sargent moves with the calm precision of someone who has spent decades reading reactions from across the sushi counter. He arrives early to receive and break down salmon, tuna, and yellowtail—the holy trinity regulars count on—and he knows exactly when a guest takes that first delighted head-nod bite. For newcomers, he points to the Pipeline, Endless Summer, and North Shore rolls, a crunchy-creamy spectrum of tuna, yellowtail, salmon, and shrimp glazed with citrus and eel sauce. But for purists, it’s sashimi: thin, gleaming slices served with seaweed salad, sweet crab, cucumber, and daikon. He even makes kimchi in-house, a nod to the Korean food he loves.

Alys Beach has its own culinary heartbeat, and at George’s, chef Camille Withall builds her menu around flavor above all else. “My fear is for my food to be bland or boring,” she said. Swordfish belly, once a staff snack, became a signature after she realized



Chef Roman Pounders at O-Ku Alys Beach



Chef Camille Withall



George's at Alys Beach

guests loved its rich tenderness, but hadn't tried the lesser-known cut of fish. "We're the only restaurant that uses that ingredient on 30A," she said. Seasonality guides her: head-on Gulf shrimp, bright snapper, heaps of summer corn and tomatoes, winter citrus, peppery arugula. Even salads find inspiration in coastal ingredients—think orchard salad with homemade granola and apple cider dressing.

Just down the road, O-Ku's executive chef, Roman Pounders, blends Japanese technique with the coastal life he craved, fishing with his son, walking the beach, soaking in the slower rhythm. "I've always loved beach towns," he said. Sushi, for him, is both discipline and endless creativity. "There's just so much depth behind it. You have to learn rice, then nigiri, sashimi, fish butchery... so many layers."

O-Ku may fly in delicate Japanese fish or king crab from Hokkaido, but Pounders lights up when describing the interplay between luxury and the Gulf's own offerings, like the Toro spoons topped with uni, ponzu, and caviar. The Gulf is equally influential in his maki universe. The fuego roll, packed with spicy tuna and cucumber and topped with hamachi and avocado, feels like pure sunshine. Even his nightly ritual leans coastal: sneaking back for a bowl of house-made soft serve. "It'll be really key in the

summertime, when it's so hot outside," he said.

At Bijoux, Chef and Owner Jack McGuckin channels the Gulf through a philosophy of clarity and flavor. His tuna carpaccio showcases paper-thin slices of sushi-grade yellowfin dressed with olive oil, sea salt, lemon zest, capers, and chives, scooped onto blistered sourdough flatbread made fresh each day. It's raw, bright, elemental—the way you want seafood to taste when the ocean is just blocks away.

Seasonality appears in unexpected places, too. Brussels sprouts fried until they blossom open and caramelize become an addictive Caesar with shaved fennel, radicchio, focaccia croutons, and Parmesan. His black grouper Almondine—sourced locally, always—gets a crisp almond crust and a basil-lemon beurre blanc, paired with Carolina Gold rice pilaf and charred haricots verts.

At Fish Out of Water in WaterColor, Director of Culinary Louis Martorano builds his menus around "freshness, seasonality, and storytelling through food," aiming to capture the beauty of the region, from the Gulf waters to the inland forests. That ethos shows up in dishes like the Pecan 205° Smoked Tuna Dip, cured in-house and smoked low and slow for 90 minutes to achieve its rich, silky depth. Grouper, "the jewel of

the Gulf," anchors multiple preparations from a handheld to a featured entrée, to a classic fried basket, each supported by a locavore approach that leans on seasonal produce.

Martorano's Peach & Tomato Burrata is a dish that has followed him from kitchen to kitchen, its creamy balance lifted by the sweetness of Alabama peaches. Through it all, he said, the philosophy remains simple: Let great ingredients shine without overcomplication and deliver bold, fresh flavors in a relaxed setting.

Gallion's brings the coastline indoors with black-and-white photographs of divers hanging like memories on the walls; menus built around what swims, grows, and blooms nearby. The smoked yellowfin tuna dip—chunky, house-made, served with lavash dusted in Old Bay and sesame seeds—arrives with a local jalapeño jam from the Rosemary Beach Farmers Market. The fall squash salad weaves acorn squash, baby kale, pumpkin seeds, farro, and rainbow carrots into an edible portrait of the season. The grouper arrives perfectly cooked with creamy white-cheddar grits, wilted rainbow chard, and jewel-toned carrots. Even dessert nods to coastal nostalgia: a towering carrot cake made from grated local carrots, topped with caramel popcorn for that crunchy, salty-sweet bite.



Cafe Thirty-A

Chef David Bishop
of Bud & Alley's



PHOTO: Chase Yakaboski

“Almost ten years ago, I moved to the Emerald Coast and immediately connected with the ingredients and the culture here,” said Gallion’s Executive Chef Alex Villalobos. “The seafood, the people, the relationship to the Gulf. It all aligned with who I am as a chef. We are steps away from the Gulf, and we have access to some of the best seafood in the country. When you are working with fish that fresh, you treat it with respect.”

And then there’s Bud & Alley’s, where the Gulf isn’t inspiration but collaborator. On the upper deck overlooking the emerald water, guests share a grilled mahi sandwich or the signature smoked tuna dip as the sugar-sand beach glows in the late afternoon sun. At sunset, the cast-iron bell rings, a Seaside tradition that feels as timeless as the tides.

The team at Ambrosia treats each fillet and shell as something to be coaxed, not conquered. The Taste of 30A—grouper with

its firm, pearly flakes; snapper that brings a clean, almost ocean-sweet brightness, crab-stuffed flounder rich with briny perfume—lands at the table like a tide of the coast itself.

Cafe Thirty-A delivers “consistently delicious” fresh Gulf seafood in inventive, global preparations like the current seared snapper served with wild mushroom and spinach risotto, a disc of ginger peach butter, and a swirl of blueberry gastrique. “My experiences have allowed me to work with many global influences, and I have tried to match those styles with the freshest local proteins and produce,” said Chef Tim Williams.

A Coast That Cooks in Community

Beyond technique and sourcing, something softer knits these chefs together, a human thread that runs beneath all the artistry. When they talk about their work, their voices shift when the topic turns to guests. They describe the moment someone takes a first bite, the widening eyes, the pause, the unconscious nod, as the purest reward in the craft.

They talk about their teams with affection, crediting line cooks, dishwashers, sous chefs, and servers with giving life to the food. Kitchens on 30A, they say, function like extended families—sometimes chaotic, often loud, but always bonded by a shared purpose.

And they speak about community in a way that feels earnestly rooted in the coast. They know the fishermen who bring their fish. They know the farmers who grow the herbs and greens that brighten their plates. They know the regulars who return year after year, chasing not just a meal but a memory. ☺



Gallion's



Premium Wines



WATERSOUND[®]
TOWN CENTER

COME FOR WHAT'S **HERE**.
RETURN FOR WHAT'S **COMING**.

COMING 2026

FP MOVEMENT | JOHNNIE-O | HEMLINE
MONKEE'S | SUNSET SHOES & LIFESTYLES



[WATERSOUNDTOWNCENTER.COM](https://watersoundtowncenter.com)

85 ORIGINS MAIN STREET | INLET BEACH, FL 32461

Leasing Opportunities Available

© The St. Joe Company 2025. All Rights Reserved. "Watersound" is a service mark of The St. Joe Company.



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY,
CALIFORNIA

You don't hear a lot of noise along the coastline through San Luis Obispo County. In winter, that quiet feels especially generous. Mornings arrive cool and clear, the light softer, the beaches less hurried. It is the kind of season that rewards taking the scenic route, lingering a little longer, and letting the coast set the pace. More often than not, the crash of the waves drowns out the occasional tourist chatter or the small-town hum that drifts from the beach communities along this stretch of central California.

The county, anchored by the city of the same name, begins with the southern beach towns of Pismo Beach and Grover Beach and stretches more than 70 miles north to Ragged Point, where Highway 1 starts its ascent toward Big Sur. A February 2024 landslide closed a portion of the highway, impacting local communities and northbound travel to Monterey. Even so, there remains plenty to see and do throughout this vibrant region. That flexibility suits San Luis Obispo County well, offering the feeling of having gone somewhere new without requiring a marathon journey.

Seventy miles can be covered in a couple of hours, but with so much to explore, the journey almost always takes longer. Beaches and coastal towns give way to rolling hills and open bluffs, shaped by a patchwork of microclimates and close ties to the natural landscape. One moment you are wrapped in cool marine air, the next you are peeling off layers as the sun breaks through. Fog and drizzle can quickly yield to warmth in the short distance between towns, making each stop feel distinct.

Ragged Point
San Simeon Coastline

WHY GO?

Outdoor enthusiasts will find plenty to do throughout the county. The hiking alone is worth the trip, particularly in the cooler months, when trails feel quieter. The rugged bluffs of Montaña de Oro State Park are a highlight, offering dramatic coastal scenery and windswept paths that feel especially alive in winter. Farther north, the coastline toward Cambria delivers its own rewards, from crashing surf to peaceful overlooks.

There are several stretches of coast ideal for kayaking, boating, and other water sports. Avila Beach, Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, and Cayucos are all excellent towns for a classic beach day, whether that means walking the shoreline, watching surfers, or settling in with a book and a warm drink. The county is also a standout biking destination, with low-traffic roads outside the main towns and a mix of rolling and steep hills, depending on how ambitious you feel. Thanks to the coastal and coastal-adjacent climate, outdoor weather remains inviting across much of the year.

The climate also makes San Luis Obispo County a strong destination for wine lovers. Cooler coastal influences shape many of the wines here, lending themselves to relaxed tastings and long afternoons spent between vineyards. While Paso Robles is the county’s most famous wine hub, the county also includes coastal American Viticultural Areas (AVAs), including Edna Valley and Arroyo Grande Valley, plus the broader San Luis Obispo Coast AVA established in 2022. Chamisal Vineyards in the Edna Valley and Parr Collective near Cambria are two excellent wineries to build a day around.

Evenings tend to be quieter, which only adds to the appeal. For a memorable after-dark outing, Paso Robles offers Sensorio, a walking experience of illuminated exhibits that glow softly against the night sky. With on-site food and drink, it makes for an easy, lingering evening, whether you are traveling as a couple or with kids in tow.



Cayucos Pier
PHOTO: Danna Dykstra-Coy



PHOTO: SLO Wine / Brittney App



Edna Valley



A quiet winter sunset at Cayucos Pier
PHOTO: Danna Dykstra-Coy



Highway 1



Morro Bay
PHOTO: Danna Dykstra-Coy



Los Osos Baywood Park
Montaña de Oro



Avila Beach Market



Linn's Pie

HOW DO I GET THERE?

If you are flying, the most convenient option is San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport, located just south of the city. Santa Maria Airport is another option, about forty-five minutes south by car, though it offers more limited service.

The county's location also makes driving from San Francisco or Los Angeles an easy option. Highway 101 serves as the dependable backbone route, offering a scenic and straightforward approach from either direction.

Once you are in the area, driving is the best option. San Luis Obispo County is expansive, and destinations are spread out, encouraging an unhurried approach and plenty of spontaneous stops along the way.

WHERE SHOULD I EAT?

Throughout the county, there is a strong focus on what is fresh and local. That ethos comes to life at restaurants like Mirazur in Baywood Los Osos and Brydge in Cambria, where seasonal ingredients shape thoughtful menus.

Sebastian's General Store in San Simeon is a favorite stop for local products and casual bites, and it is also home to Seaside, the on-site deli known for its simple, satisfying fare.

With locations in Cayucos and Cambria, The Hidden Kitchen makes for a great daytime stop, whether you are grabbing something quick or settling in before an afternoon outside. And if you have room for dessert, olallieberry pie at Linn's is a Central Coast classic and well worth the indulgence.

Farmers markets run year-round throughout the county, and it is not uncommon to spot roadside stands selling whatever happens to be fresh and abundant that week.

Morro Bay
PHOTO: Danna Dykstra-Coy



WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

There is no shortage of small hotels, bed and breakfasts, and vacation rentals throughout the county, many of them designed for slowing down and settling in.

Just outside the city of San Luis Obispo, La Lomita Ranch offers a peaceful stay in the Edna Valley wine region. Set on a working farm, it is known for its relaxed atmosphere and well-loved breakfast, making it an easy base for exploring nearby wineries, beaches, and trails.

Cambria is a smart home base before heading into the more remote terrain north of town. White Water sits directly on Moonstone Beach, with boardwalk access right outside the front door and ocean views that feel especially dramatic during the winter months.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Because this area is often less crowded than some of California's more famous coastal stretches, it offers solid value, particularly in the winter season.

As of mid-December 2025, published winter rates on major travel sites vary widely by night and room type, but example starting prices show White Water in the low two-hundreds on some early January dates and La Lomita Ranch in the low three-hundreds on some late December dates, before taxes and fees. Prices change frequently, so consider these figures a general snapshot rather than a fixed expectation.

Wine tasting fees also vary by producer and experience. At places like Parr Collective, some tastings are offered at a per-person fee with potential waivers based on purchase, while special events and curated experiences may be priced differently. 🍷




ALYS
SHOPPE



Perfectly positioned in The Della, within Alys Beach Town Center, Alys Shoppe joins a thoughtful collection of carefully cast shops and restaurants designed to take guests from breakfast through dinner, with everything in between. Alys Shoppe's well-edited logo collection pairs with designer apparel and luxury accessories to cultivate an elevated coastal lifestyle experience.

850.213.5550 | ALYSSHOPPE.COM

8

1 ICONIC HOLES



Pebble Beach Golf Links, Hole #7
PHOTO: Jeff Marsh

WHERE LAND, SEA, AND STRATEGY MEET

By Geoff Nudelman

The thrill and challenge of golfing along the coastline is unmatched. While the scenery alone is worth a round, the ever-changing conditions offer a true test of skill. Wind and weather can shift in an instant, demanding extra precision with every approach.

Golf has long been a draw along America's coastlines, attracting not only amateurs but also some of the game's most iconic

tournaments and defining moments. These courses have witnessed both legendary triumphs and heartbreaking defeats, often with everything on the line.

For the rest of us, though, these eight coastal gems are simply spectacular places to play, with breathtaking views around every turn.



PEBBLE BEACH GOLF LINKS, CALIFORNIA

Hole #7, Par-3, 107 yards

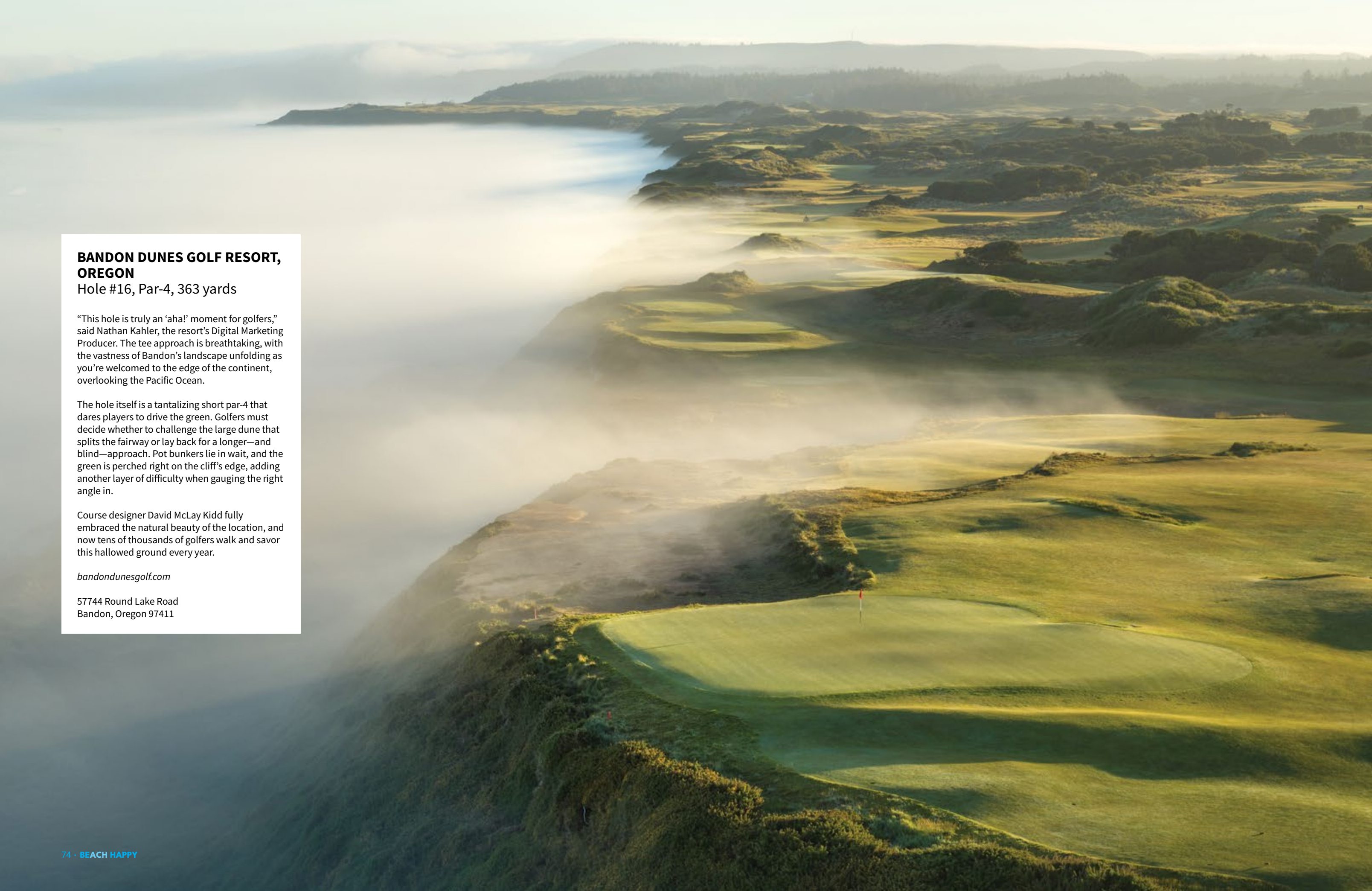
Managing this short, stunning hole starts with managing your emotions. It's easy to get swept up in the scenery, and in the legend this hole holds within golfing lore. Hole #7 is famous for its dramatic downhill tee shot to a small green perched on a rocky point, overlooking the vast Pacific Ocean. Wind is often the most significant factor here, adding a layer of complexity to a shot that demands careful club selection and precision to avoid bunkers, rocks, and the water below.

Fun fact: Since 1972, Pebble Beach Golf Links has hosted eight majors, including seven U.S. Opens.

pebblebeach.com

1700 17 Mile Drive
Pebble Beach, California 93953

PHOTO: Jeff Marsh



BANDON DUNES GOLF RESORT, OREGON

Hole #16, Par-4, 363 yards

“This hole is truly an ‘aha!’ moment for golfers,” said Nathan Kahler, the resort’s Digital Marketing Producer. The tee approach is breathtaking, with the vastness of Bandon’s landscape unfolding as you’re welcomed to the edge of the continent, overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

The hole itself is a tantalizing short par-4 that dares players to drive the green. Golfers must decide whether to challenge the large dune that splits the fairway or lay back for a longer—and blind—approach. Pot bunkers lie in wait, and the green is perched right on the cliff’s edge, adding another layer of difficulty when gauging the right angle in.

Course designer David McLay Kidd fully embraced the natural beauty of the location, and now tens of thousands of golfers walk and savor this hallowed ground every year.

bandondunesgolf.com

57744 Round Lake Road
Bandon, Oregon 97411



**STRAITS COURSE AT
WHISTLING STRAITS,
WISCONSIN**

Hole #13 “Cliff Hanger,” Par-4,
402 yards

This hole earned its name as it hugs the bends of Lake Michigan. The approach plays downhill, with the green set within striking distance of the water.

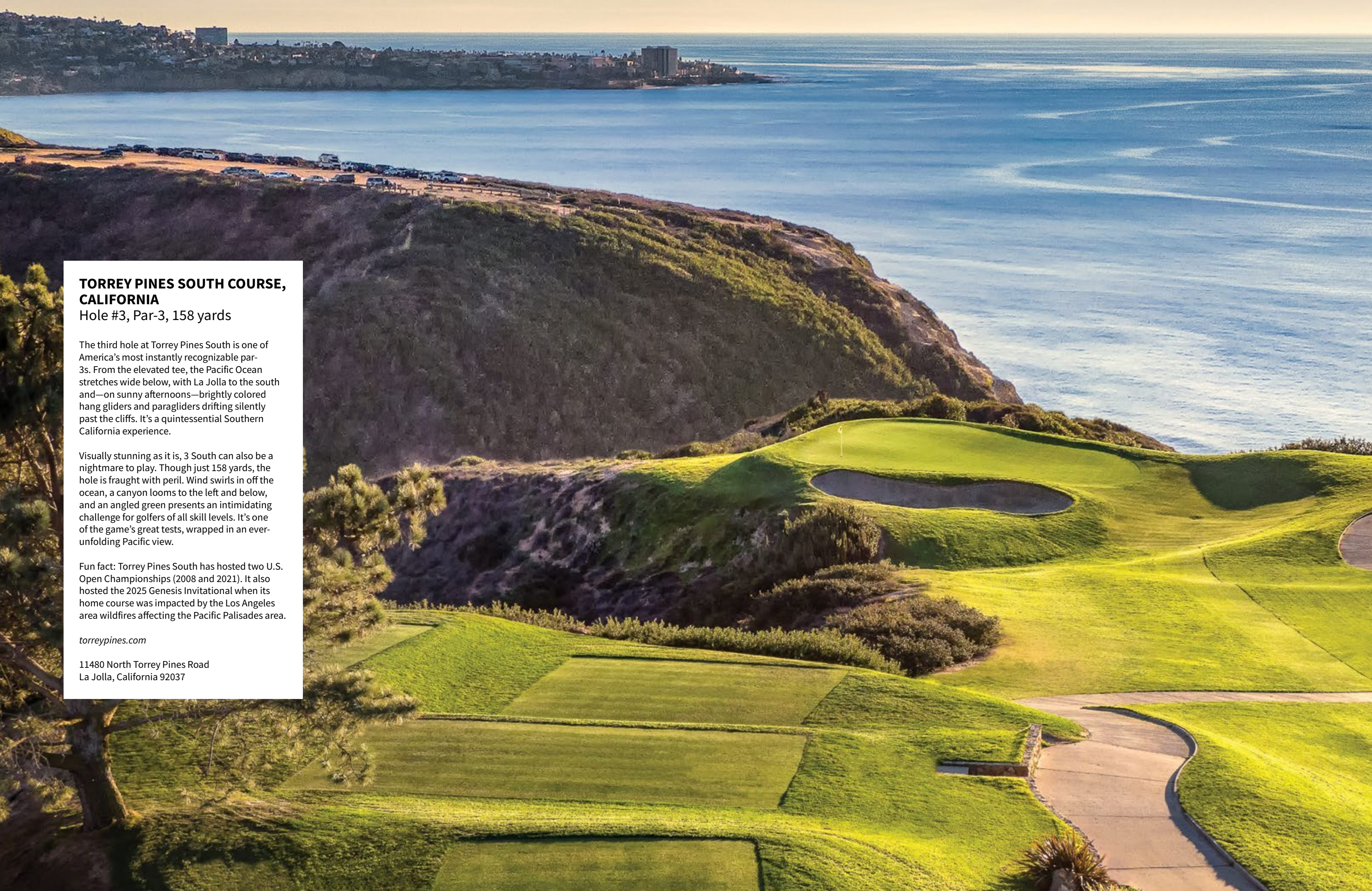
“The hole is a short par-4 with a large fairway that slopes toward a challenging green,” said Michael O’Reilly, general manager of Whistling Straits and Blackwolf Run. “The green has several slopes on it, so landing in the correct spot is required if you want to get the ball close to the hole.”

The rolling hills and curvature of the course present their own unique challenges — a stark contrast to the craggier coastal layouts along the Pacific Ocean.

kohlerwisconsin.com/golf/whistling-straits

North 8501 Lakeshore Road
Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53083

Photo courtesy of Destination Kohler



TORREY PINES SOUTH COURSE, CALIFORNIA

Hole #3, Par-3, 158 yards

The third hole at Torrey Pines South is one of America's most instantly recognizable par-3s. From the elevated tee, the Pacific Ocean stretches wide below, with La Jolla to the south and—on sunny afternoons—brightly colored hang gliders and paragliders drifting silently past the cliffs. It's a quintessential Southern California experience.

Visually stunning as it is, 3 South can also be a nightmare to play. Though just 158 yards, the hole is fraught with peril. Wind swirls in off the ocean, a canyon looms to the left and below, and an angled green presents an intimidating challenge for golfers of all skill levels. It's one of the game's great tests, wrapped in an ever-unfolding Pacific view.

Fun fact: Torrey Pines South has hosted two U.S. Open Championships (2008 and 2021). It also hosted the 2025 Genesis Invitational when its home course was impacted by the Los Angeles area wildfires affecting the Pacific Palisades area.

torreypines.com

11480 North Torrey Pines Road
La Jolla, California 92037



MAUNA KEA GOLF COURSE, HAWAII

Hole #3, Par-3, 179 yards

Hole #3 stands as the crown jewel of this recently renovated course, celebrated worldwide as one of the most iconic par-3s. Its dramatic tee shot stretches across the Kohala Coast, framed by lava rock cliffs and crashing waves, offering a challenge that's both demanding and cerebral.

“Adding to its mystique is a hidden tee box, crafted in 1964 by Robert Trent Jones Sr. for the original Big 3 televised match,” said Diana Su, Director of Marketing and Public Relations at Mauna Kea Resort. “This secret tee extends the hole and alters the angle of play, daring golfers to carry even more of the ocean to reach the green.”

According to Su, it's a feature that perfectly embodies the spirit of Mauna Kea: iconic and unforgettable.

chronogolf.com/club/mauna-kea-golf-course

62-100 Mauna Kea Beach Drive
Waimea, Hawaii 96743



PRINCEVILLE MAKAI, HAWAI‘I
Hole #7, Par-3, 200 yards

Perched on Kauai’s rugged northern coastline, Hole #7 is known for conditions that can shift in an instant. Prevailing winds often force golfers to completely rethink their approach, while low clouds can obscure the ridgeline view that’s essential for gauging distance.

Despite the challenge, this is undoubtedly Princeville’s most popular hole, thanks to sweeping Pacific vistas and a stunning backdrop of Mount Makana. Reaching the tee requires a walk across a ravine, intertwined with the island’s lush, natural landscape.

The hole is considered so scenic that the resort offers it as a wedding venue, and even hosts a long-running yoga series on the green.

golfwithaccess.com/course/princeville-makai-golf-club

4080 Lei O Papa Road
Princeville, Hawai‘i 96722

**THE OCEAN COURSE AT KIAWAH
ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA**
Hole #17, Par-3, 223 yards

"This par-three at The Ocean Course is undoubtedly the most recognizable hole on the course, and, I would venture to assert, one of the most recognizable in the world among golf aficionados," said Bryan Hunter, director of public relations at Kiawah Island Resort. "The legendary (golf course designer) Pete Dye created an incredibly challenging hole, which he claimed was his favorite on the course, both physically and psychologically." The expanse of water separating the tee box from the green is visually emphasized by a bulwark of vertical timbers fronting the entire length of the green. Go too short, and your shot will be in the water. Go too long and you'll find yourself in a bunker battling the need to overshoot while calculating the wind and the adjacent Atlantic.

kiawahresort.com/golf

1 Sanctuary Beach Drive
Kiawah Island, South Carolina 29455



BURNT PINE GOLF CLUB, FLORIDA

Hole #14, Par-3, 212 yards

Bringing it home to Scenic Highway 30A in Northwest Florida, Hole 14 at Sandestin's Burnt Pine Golf Club is a signature par-3 that showcases course architect Rees Jones' signature blend of strategy and scenery.

"It perfectly captures the spirit of Burnt Pine, combining coastal views, a thoughtful challenge, and that unmistakable Emerald Coast feel," said Rick Hileman, PGA Executive Director of Golf Operations at the club.

Played from an elevated tee over natural marshland, the hole is framed by sweeping views of Choptawhatchee Bay and shaped by ever-shifting coastal winds that make club selection critical. Subtle green contours demand precision, while the dramatic setting and risk-reward design make it one of the most photographed and celebrated holes on the course.

sandestin.com/golf/burnt-pine

3300 Burnt Pine Lane
Miramar Beach, Florida 32550

SHUNK GULLEY

OYSTER BAR

FRESH SEAFOOD - GULF VIEWS - LIVE MUSIC



2025 HOT SPOT
HOTTEST SPOT FOR
CASUAL DINING

PERFECT
IN WALTON COUNTY
2025
BEST CASUAL DINING



2025 HOT SPOT
BEST RAW OYSTERS

2025 BEST
of the EMERALD COAST
BEST APPETIZER

2025 BEST
of the EMERALD COAST
BEST GROUPER
SANDWICH

WWW.SHUNKGULLEY.COM

@SHUNKGULLEY30A SHUNK GULLEY OYSTER BAR



1875 S. COUNTY HWY 393, SANTA ROSA BEACH, FL

NEW IN PANAMA CITY BEACH!



HAPPY HOUR

MONDAY - SUNDAY
2:30PM-4:30 PM
Bar seating Only



SCAN FOR DINNER RESERVATIONS



LUNCH

11 AM - 2:30PM
FAMILY FRIENDLY
DINING EXPERIENCE.

BAR

11 AM - CLOSE

DINNER

5 PM - 10 PM
18 YEARS AND OLDER
DINING EXPERIENCE.



GALLION'S

RESTAURANT
Cocktail Lounge

f gallion's

WWW.GALLIONS30A.COM

@gallionsrestaurant



PIRATES VOYAGE®

DINNER & SHOW
A Dolly Parton Company

Panama City Beach's newest attraction invites you to join the most famous pirate, Blackbeard, and his quartermaster Calico Jack as they lead the Crimson and Sapphire crews in battle on land, on deck, in water and high above full-sized pirate ships in a 15-foot-deep indoor lagoon! You'll thrill to spectacular acrobatic competitions, sea lions, tropical birds, beautiful mermaids and much more all while you enjoy a fabulous four-course feast.

PIRATESVOYAGE.COM
(850) 909.2469



AFTER THE SHOW,
SET SAIL FOR
SKY-HIGH VIEWS!
Located at PIER PARK
pcbwheel.com

WHAT TO WEAR, BRING, AND ENJOY WHEN NIGHTS TURN COOL

By Geoff Nudelman

Though the days are at their shortest, the season invites a quieter way of experiencing the coast. Stars appear earlier in the evening, and a well-tended bonfire can carry on long after night has settled in. It is a time for longer sleeves and lingering moments, hands wrapped around a warm cup as you rest in the steady glow of the fire.

As the season shifts, the rhythm of coastal life follows suit, making space to trade summer staples for a few cold-weather favorites. The six pieces that follow are designed to keep you comfortable through crisp evenings by the shore, and perhaps offer something to look forward to as winter eases its way in.



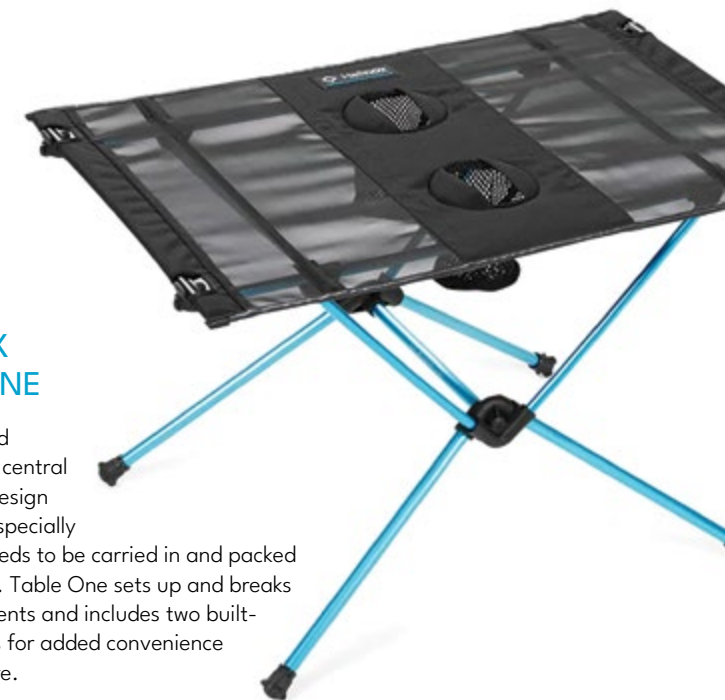
PHOTO: Lauren Duesing/ LA FREE FILM

HELINOX TABLE ONE

Portability and durability are central to Helinox's design philosophy, especially when gear needs to be carried in and packed out with ease. Table One sets up and breaks down in moments and includes two built-in cup holders for added convenience around the fire.

An easy-to-clean performance fabric forms the tabletop, paired with a lightweight aluminum alloy frame that remains stable even on sandy ground. Together, these elements create a compact, dependable surface that feels right at home during relaxed evenings by the coast.

[HELINOX.COM](https://www.helinox.com)
\$139



THIRTY-A BIG ARC SWEATSHIRT

Show a little love for your favorite stretch of coastline with this classic varsity-style sweatshirt from 30A Gear. Offered in a range of soft pastel lettering options, the design reflects the sun-washed hues found along the drive.

With its relaxed, oversized fit, it makes an easy layer for cooler nights, whether you are gathered around a bonfire or winding down after a long day by the water.

[30AGEAR.COM](https://www.30agear.com)
\$65



WISE OWL OUTFITTERS CAMPING BLANKET

From laid-back seaside picnics to an extra layer when the breeze rolls in, this packable blanket is designed with easy coastal living in mind. When fully opened, it provides generous coverage for wrapping, then folds down to a compact, travel-friendly size.

The down alternative insulation is built to stand up to repeated use, while a water repellent finish adds an extra layer of practicality. It is also machine washable, a small detail that makes a big difference after sandy nights by the shore.

[MYWISEOWLOUTFITTERS.COM](https://mywiseowloutfitters.com)
\$55

PAKA THERMAL PUMA CREW SOCKS

One of the quiet pleasures of cooler months is the return of thicker, cozier socks, the kind you reach for without much thought on brisk mornings or evenings by the fire. PAKA works with Peruvian artisans to bring generations of textile tradition to life through a range of knitwear, including these durable cold-weather socks.

Crafted from alpaca yarn, the socks feature a traditional Quechua puma paw print motif. A portion of each purchase supports local Peruvian organizations that help preserve these artisanal practices and amplify the work of the creators behind them.



[PAKAAPPAREL.COM](https://pakaapparel.com)
\$28

SKULLCANDY TERRAIN MINI

What's a bonfire without music? Compact enough to slip into the palm of your hand, the Skullcandy Terrain Mini delivers sound that feels far bigger than its size.

With up to 14 hours of battery life, it is built to carry you through an entire evening outdoors. An IPX7 rating offers protection against splashes and moisture, though it is best kept clear of saltwater. Available in several bold patterns, it adds a playful visual note as well, including the standout Triple Threat Sunset colorway shown here.

[SKULLCANDY.COM](https://skullcandy.com)
\$42



SOLO STOVE BONFIRE FIRE PIT & STAND

A self-contained, portable fire pit is an ideal solution when beach regulations limit traditional driftwood fires or when your plans carry you from one stretch of coastline to the next. Solo Stove has set a new standard for modern bonfires with its flagship stainless steel design, engineered for efficiency, ease of use, and clean burning performance.

The Bonfire model is well-suited for small gatherings, comfortably accommodating groups of several people, while the brand now offers a range of sizes for different settings. Paired with a thoughtful selection of accessories and add-ons, it delivers instant warmth and atmosphere, making it easy to create a cozy fireside moment wherever the evening unfolds.

[SOLOSTOVE.COM](https://solostove.com)
\$349

Bonfire rules and permit requirements vary by location. Always check local beach regulations before lighting a fire.

FOREVER, FRAMED

FROM THE SUGAR-WHITE SANDS OF FLORIDA'S SCENIC HIGHWAY 30A,
TWO PHOTOGRAPHERS BRING TIMELESS LOVE STORIES TO LIFE.

BY GEOFF NUDELMAN



Final touches, deep breaths, and the moment it all begins to sink in.

When it comes to dream-worthy backdrops, few places deliver quite like 30A. This 19-mile stretch of Gulf-front paradise in South Walton is home to some of the most breathtaking scenery in the country. Think sugar-white sand beaches, rare coastal dune lakes, emerald-green waters, and beach towns that feel like they belong in a storybook.

From the pastel cottages of Seaside to the all-white architecture of Alys Beach and the cobblestone charm of Rosemary Beach, every corner of 30A offers a setting that feels both cinematic and personal. It's no wonder couples from all over choose this slice of the Florida Panhandle to say "I do" and to capture the moments they'll treasure for a lifetime.

While social media may be filled with trending wedding aesthetics and viral poses, your love story deserves something more lasting. Along 30A, timeless natural beauty meets genuine emotion, and these two standout photographers know exactly how to preserve it. Whether it's a barefoot ceremony at sunset or a quiet engagement session tucked into the dunes, they specialize in turning real moments into lasting works of art.

PHOTOS BY LA FREE FILM



Small things, beautifully arranged — flowers, rings, and a little bit of magic.



Joy, laughter, and the warmth of sisterhood, with the bride's closest girls just steps from the aisle.

LA FREE FILM

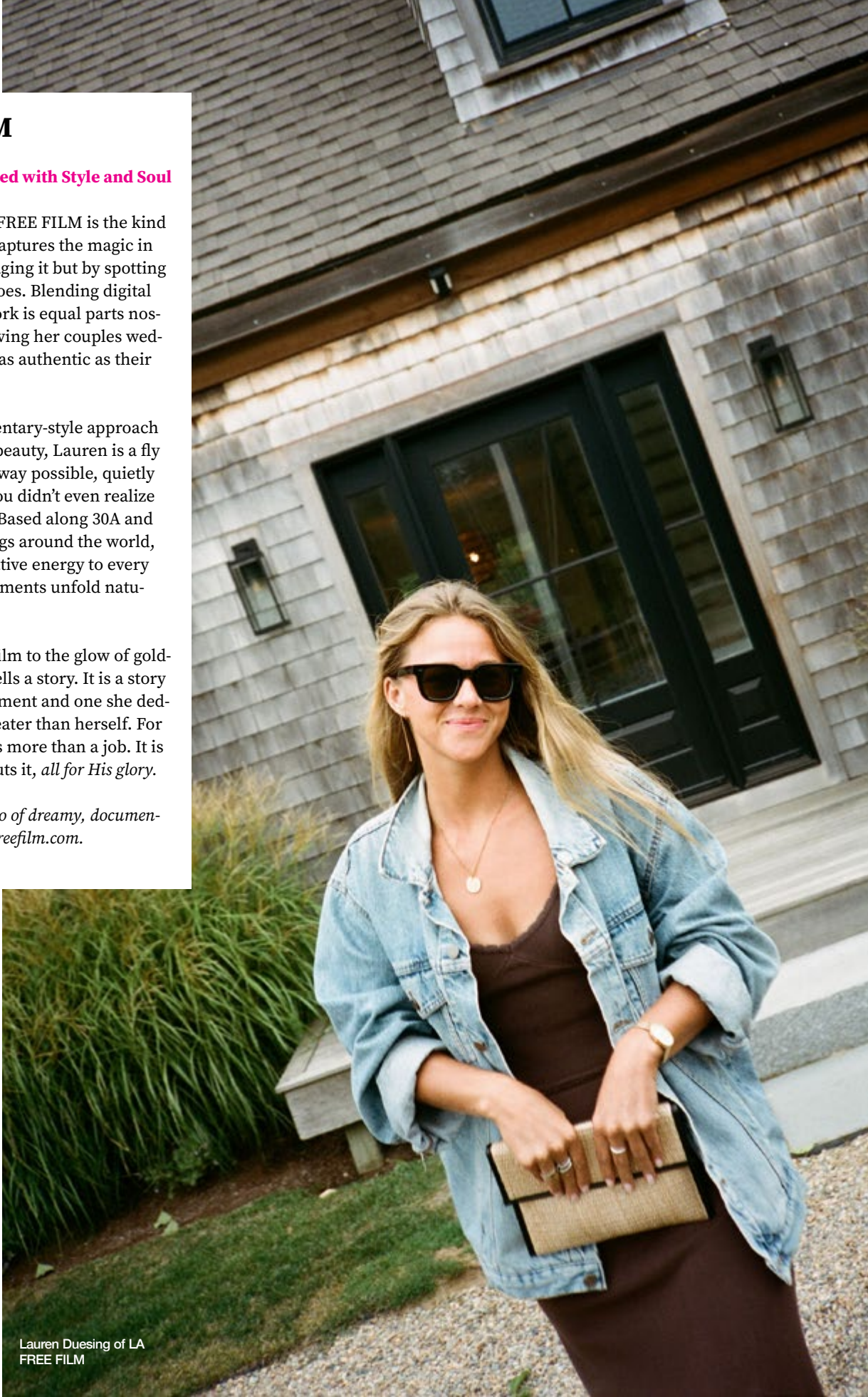
Real Moments, Captured with Style and Soul

Lauren Duesing of LA FREE FILM is the kind of photographer who captures the magic in the moment, not by staging it but by spotting it before anyone else does. Blending digital and 35mm film, her work is equal parts nostalgic and effortless, giving her couples wedding galleries that feel as authentic as their love.

Known for her documentary-style approach and eye for unfiltered beauty, Lauren is a fly on the wall in the best way possible, quietly capturing the details you didn't even realize would mean so much. Based along 30A and photographing weddings around the world, she brings a calm, creative energy to every celebration, letting moments unfold naturally and artistically.

From the grain of the film to the glow of golden hour, every frame tells a story. It is a story she is honored to document and one she dedicates to something greater than herself. For Lauren, photography is more than a job. It is a calling. And as she puts it, *all for His glory*.

See Lauren's full portfolio of dreamy, documentary-style imagery at lafreefilm.com.



Lauren Duesing of LA FREE FILM



A little messy, a lot memorable. This is what real celebration looks like.



Laughter, a quick pour, and that just-before-it-all-begins feeling captured in an Alys Beach wedding.



REFUGE & CO.

Stories Shaped by Light, Place, Connection, and Joy

Meet Anna and Ryan Leonard, the heart and soul behind Refuge & Co., a husband-and-wife duo blending artistry and authenticity in every frame. Now based full time on the sun-soaked shores of 30A, they bring a calming presence and a purpose filled passion to every wedding they photograph.

Rooted in faith and guided by connection, Anna and Ryan believe your wedding day should be filled with peace, joy, and meaningful moments, the kind that linger long after the last dance. Their signature style is warm, timeless, and deeply human, capturing both the picture-perfect details and those unscripted, in-between glances that tell your true story.

More than just photographers, they see their role as a refuge: a steady, supportive presence during one of life's biggest milestones. With every click of the shutter, they celebrate who you are and how you love, creating images that feel as real and lasting as the vows you say.

Explore more of Anna and Ryan's work at refugephotography.org.

The Leqnards



A rainbow of love under the palms. This Seaside wedding brought bold color, big joy, and serious celebration vibes.

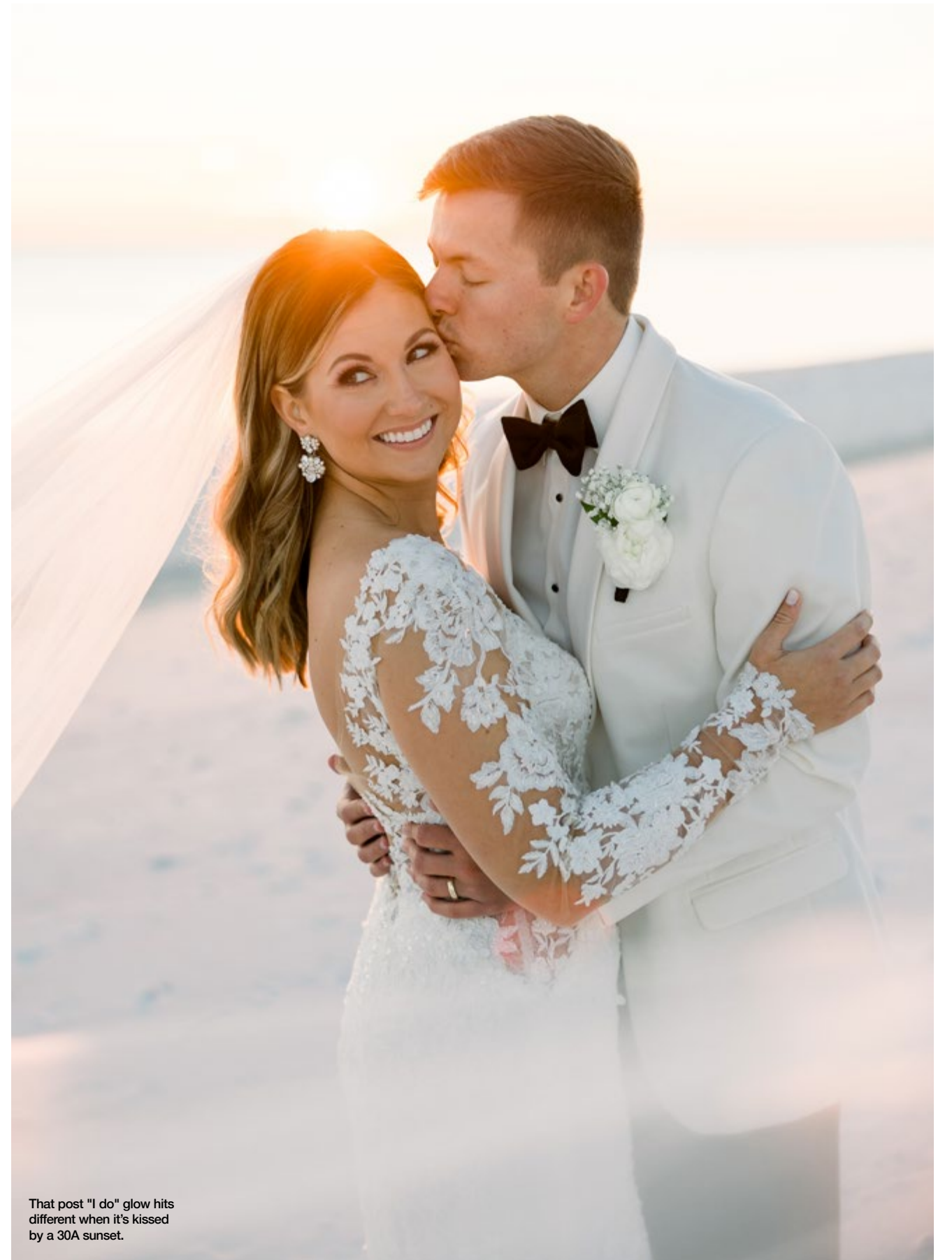
A tender moment on the boardwalk with the rare beauty of a coastal dune lake in view. A scene only 30A could offer.



A kiss on the boardwalk to Rosemary Beach, framed by the iconic Pearl Hotel. A moment full of place and feeling.



That post "I do" glow hits different when it's kissed by a 30A sunset.



The Heart of 30A

OLD FLORIDA FISH HOUSE



With views of Eastern Lake and the Gulf, the Old Florida Fish House offers a one-of-a-kind dining and entertainment experience.

Enjoy gulf-to-table seafood, award-winning sushi, live entertainment and the best atmosphere on 30A.

Reservations Accepted 850.534.3045 | www.oldfloridafishhouse.com
33 Heron's Watch Way, Santa Rosa Beach, Florida

OSHER
LIFELONG
LEARNING
INSTITUTE

FSU
PANAMA CITY 30A

FEED YOUR MIND & SPIRIT
Discover a world of fascinating experiences & vibrant community.
Here, you are always close to a new adventure.

JOIN OLLI TODAY AT PC.FSU.EDU/OLLI

THIS IS YOUR SIGN

Take the Trip.

BOOK YOUR 30A VACATION RENTAL NOW ON 30A.COM



**Ice Cream • Chocolate
Pralines • Brittles • Gummies**

plus Adult Flavors!



30A West - next to Shunk Gulley
4368 W County Hwy 30A • Tel 850-622-0011

30A Seagrove - Greenway Station
4771 E County Hwy 30A • Tel 850-622-0011

Destin Harbor
535 Harbor Blvd (98 West) • Tel 850-460-2026

pecanjacks.com

What Your Money Rents

By Karina Caraballo

A stay along Scenic Highway 30A is more than a getaway; it's a curated coastal experience. Personalized services and thoughtful touches set the tone for effortless luxury, while many properties offer opportunities for poolside relaxation, wellness, and beachside leisure, letting guests tailor each day to blend recreation, comfort, and coastal sophistication.

Let these featured rentals be your gateway to a winter of sand, surf, and seaside serenity, where every stay feels like a bespoke escape.



47 Whalebone Alley
Alys Beach, FL

4 BED | 5 BATH | SLEEPS 8

This beautiful, new home on the North Turtle Bale Pedestrian Path is perfectly positioned between the Caliza pool complex and the new Silva pool complex opening Spring 2026. Guests enjoy exclusive access to Caliza Pool and Restaurant, ZUMA Wellness Center, private beach, and resort amenities including concierge services, racquet sports, bike rentals, and curated signature experiences—making for an effortless, elevated coastal escape.



36 Sea Star Court
Alys Beach, FL

4 BED | 4.5 BATH | SLEEPS 10

Located directly on the North Turtle Bale pedestrian path, this striking Alys Beach home features four bedrooms with private baths, dramatic two-story living spaces, and a private pool with covered outdoor seating. A rear courtyard with a fountain, built-in grill, and wet bar makes entertaining effortless, while an expansive second-floor terrace overlooks the main living area. Guests enjoy concierge services, exclusive Caliza Pool and Restaurant access, ZUMA Wellness Center, private beach access, and a full suite of resort amenities for the perfect escape.



Sundance is a beautiful, three-story beach home located in the gated Pinecrest neighborhood, just a five-minute walk to the beach and Rosemary. This four-bedroom home with a crow's nest features a private heated pool, open living spaces, and a chef's kitchen with high-end appliances. Multiple primary suites, a fun bunk room, and Gulf views from the crow's nest make it ideal for groups seeking comfort and coastal charm.

Sundance
Inlet Beach, FL
4 BED | 5 BATH | SLEEPS 12



The Sandbox by Vacasa is a three-story Gulf-front home with private beach access and sweeping Gulf views from all three levels. With more than 1,000 square feet of decks, an airy open layout, and a fully equipped kitchen, it's designed for relaxed beachfront living. Located minutes from Grand Boulevard and Gulf Place Town Center, this retreat delivers prime views with easy access to 30A's best dining and shopping.

The Sandbox
Santa Rosa Beach, FL
5 BED | 3.5 BATH | SLEEPS 14



30A Sandcastle by Oversee in Blue Mountain Beach is a four-story retreat offering luxury and space for the whole family. Multiple living areas, a chef's kitchen, rooftop sun deck with gulf views, and a private pool make entertaining effortless, while a dedicated kids' floor keeps younger guests happily occupied. Just steps from Gulfview Heights beach and minutes from Blue Mountain's shops and restaurants, this home blends comfort, style, and the perfect coastal setting.

Our 30A Sandcastle
Blue Mountain Beach, FL
7 BED | 7.5 BATH | SLEEPS 24



Casa Paradiso at Tops'l by Vacasa is a stylish, all-new retreat offering refined Emerald Coast living with full access to Tops'l Resort amenities. Designed for effortless entertaining, the home features chic indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, a private patio with grill, multiple lounges, and a sleek open-concept kitchen. Guests enjoy resort perks including pools, tennis courts, a fitness center, and on-site beach access, making Casa Paradiso an elevated choice for those who want it all.

Casa Paradiso at Tops'l
Miramar Beach, FL
4 BED | 5 BATH | SLEEPS 10





All Our Summers by 30A Escapes is a newly renovated, six-bedroom lakefront home on Seagrove Beach's coastal dune lake, sleeping up to 16 guests. Enjoy mornings on the private dock, days kayaking or biking to the beach, and evenings around the fire pit under the stars. With a golf cart, eight bikes, and luxe amenities included throughout, this retreat is made for unforgettable group getaways.

All Our Summers
Seagrove Beach, FL

6 BED | 5 BATH | SLEEPS 16



WaterColor Inn
Santa Rosa Beach, FL

Nestled along Florida's Emerald Coast, WaterColor Inn is a AAA Four-Diamond beachfront resort set among white-sand beaches, coastal dune lakes, and pine forests. Families enjoy pools, water slides, a lazy river, playgrounds, and beachside activities, while suites offer Gulf views and private beach access. With year-round amenities and dining at the reimagined Fish Out of Water, it's the perfect coastal escape.



Casablanca by 30A Escapes is a five-bedroom coastal retreat in the gated Waters Edge community of Seacrest Beach, just 50 feet from the sand and directly adjacent to Rosemary Beach. The home features a private pool, three primary suites, Gulf-view balconies, and seasonal beach service for effortless days by the water. With seven cruiser bikes included, exploring 30A is a breeze, making Casablanca a standout choice for group getaways that prioritize location, luxury, and ease.

Casablanca
Seacrest Beach, FL

5 BED | 4 BATH | SLEEPS 12



The Pearl
Rosemary Beach, FL

The Pearl in Rosemary Beach offers boutique luxury on Florida's Emerald Coast, blending European-inspired elegance with the charm of one of the state's most exclusive seaside towns. Guests enjoy private beach access, a rooftop pool, spa services, and dining at Havana Beach Bar & Grill. With curated experiences, refined service, and an intimate coastal ambiance, The Pearl is a perfect winter escape for couples or travelers seeking a stylish getaway.



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 \$5 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 Coffee by Amavida
SALTIE by 30A Premium Haircare
30A Candles by Postcards
30A Rentals by Stay Sense

30A MEDIA

30A.com
Beach Happy Magazine
30Arealestate.com
30Arentals.com
30Adining.com
SouthWalton.com
30A Facebook
30A Instagram
30A TikTok
30A YouTube
30A X
30A iPhone
30A Android
30A Newsletter
Hey30A AI



30A.COM

WANT TO PARTNER? EMAIL ADVERTISING@30A.COM OR LICENSING@30A.COM

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Text **SAFETY** to **31279** for surf conditions



DOUBLE RED FLAGS
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 ensure 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

WINTER HAS ARRIVED. LET'S START BREWING.



NEW LOCATION OPENING EARLY 2026

ROSÉ WILL BE ONE OF THE FIRST BEERS WE BREW AT THE NEW LOCATION. SPECIAL TO US BECAUSE OF THE HIBISCUS AND GULF SALT USED IN BREWING THIS DELICIOUS TAKE ON THE LEIPZIG GOSE STYLE BREW

11275 US-331 S FREEPORT FL 32439