

NORTHWEST FLORIDA



NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA



SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

PURCHASING THE PERFECT GETAWAY



NORTHWEST FLORIDA

Easy to get to, hard to forget

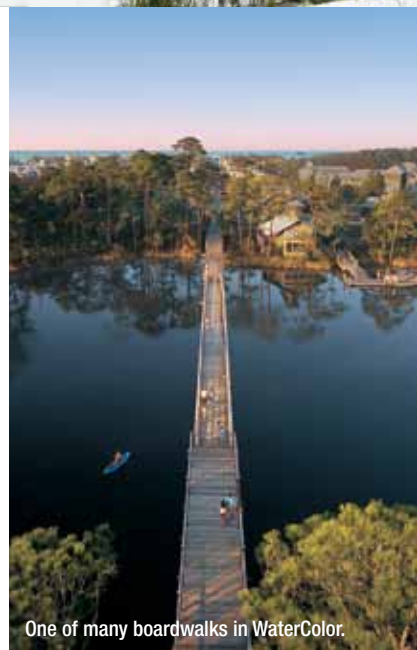
BY **ABBY HOFFNER**

KNOWN FOR ITS EMERALD GREEN WATERS AND SUGARY WHITE BEACHES, NORTHWEST FLORIDA HAS BEEN THE GETAWAY DESTINATION OF CHOICE FOR MANY TEXAS FAMILIES FOR DECADES. IF YOU'VE YET TO DISCOVER THIS PARADISE THAT'S ONLY A DAY'S DRIVE AWAY, THEN LET THIS SUMMER BE THE ONE YOU DO.

Quaint and Charming

Along Florida's northwest coast, down a stretch of highway called 30-A, a grouping of idyllic beach communities—collectively known as The Beaches of South Walton—epitomizes everything that comes to mind when one thinks “southern beach town.”

Even if you aren't staying in one of the picturesque beach houses or quaint seaside inns, explore the short drive from some of the more popular vacation destinations such as Destin. If you choose to visit for a day, we recommend first driving the 17-mile stretch to get a feel for the area. Then u-turn and explore the abundant roadside shops and art galleries. A permanent stand of food trucks at Seaside's town square provides a fun alternative to traditional dining.





WaterColor Inn

STAY

For those wanting a boutique hotel experience, book a bright and cheery room at **WaterColor Inn**, where fresh-baked cookies appear on your pillow each evening. Planning a large gathering? Rent a gorgeous luxury villa at **Alys Beach** and be within walking distance to the beach, dining and shopping.



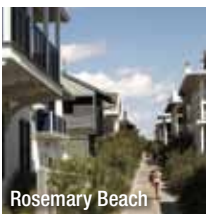
Alys Beach

DO

For the ultimate emersion into beach town life, rent a fat-tired bike and cruise down the trails that run the length of 30-A. Browse shops and art galleries, including the **World Six Gallery** at Rosemary Beach. Outdoor enthusiasts can learn about the native flora and fauna with a **nature tour** at Grayton Beach and try **YOLO boarding** among the largest concentration of rare coastal dune lakes in the world.



YOLO is short for "you only live once".



Rosemary Beach



Sandcastle building at Alys Beach.

EAT

Start your day with a breakfast worth Facebooking about at the **Great Southern Café** at Seaside. Or sleep in and opt for equally yummy lunch and dinner options. **Fish Out of Water** at WaterColor Inn serves up the best of casual seaside chic on its plates and with its atmosphere. While there, try the fried Brussels sprouts. Trust us, you'll be begging for the recipe.

V Seagrove, which just opened in March, is the new hot dining spot along 30-A. Art deco details combined with a fresh, clean color palette give it a retro-modern vibe. Chef David Cunningham's menu selections will please even the most fickle foodie. Patrons lucky enough to get an outside "island" table cross one of the V's many water features via a wooden footbridge to reach their seats.



Island tables at the V Seagrove.

FUN AND FAMILY FRIENDLY

From Pensacola to Panama, family-friendly accommodations abound. To help you narrow down the options, consider calling one of the many property management companies, such as Resort Quest, and let them help you find the perfect place to stay.

Take a break from beach time with a deep-sea fishing excursion. Visit EmeraldCoastFL.com to find a charter boat. Several restaurants in the area, including the **Lucky Snapper Grill**, will cook your fresh catch for you!

Golfers in your group? Northwest Florida boasts some of the most beautiful courses in the country—we loved the greens at Regatta Bay—so be sure and bring the clubs. If you flew and left them behind, don't despair. Quality rental clubs are available.

Serene and Romantic



Looking to rekindle some of that romantic spark? **Henderson Park Inn** treats guests to a private, grown-up beach experience at this one-of-a-kind bed and breakfast. The Victorian architecture and period furnishings at Henderson Park give it an elegant upper east-coast feel rather than casual Florida cool.

Take in camera-worthy sunsets on the large veranda overlooking the gulf during the before-dinner cocktail hour. Then enjoy delicious creations from the **Beach Walk**, the onsite restaurant that serves up unique gourmet fare (such as venison and duck) in addition to the requisite seafood. The private terraces overlooking the calming gulf waters provide the perfect place to get away from the business of everyday life and reconnect with your partner. Make reservations at HendersonParkInn.com.



SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

*Never been?
What are you waiting for?*

BY **ABBY HOFFNER**

ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST, ETCHED OUT OF THE DESERT, SAN DIEGO BECKONS THOSE IN NEED OF A COMPLETE ESCAPE. THE TIME CHANGE ALONE CAN MAKE YOU FEEL SMUG AS YOU WATCH THE SUN SLOWLY PROGRESS TOWARD THE HORIZON WHILE YOUR TEXAS PEERS HAVE BEEN IN BED FOR HOURS. AND THE WEATHER! WITH AVERAGE SUMMER TEMPERATURES AROUND 76°F, YOU'LL GET A WELCOME RESPITE FROM THE TRIPLE DIGIT HEAT SO TYPICAL OF OUR SOUTHERN SUMMERS.

Plenty to Do in Paradise

Do you have family members who get bored with the beach? While we could lounge by the waves for days—with plenty of sunscreen, of course—some need more to keep them entertained. Here's a vacation plan with plenty to please all.

STAY

Get your beach time in with a stay at the historic **Hotel Del Coronado**—the nation's largest all-wood hotel, complete with beautiful pools and gardens. Wake to soft, hazy morning and enjoy sunsets in old-fashioned wicker chairs on your private balcony.



The Hotel Del Coronado



Chef Ponsaty in his herb garden.

EAT

While in La Jolla, stop by **George's at the Cove** for a delicious lunch and unparalleled panoramic ocean views. Their fish tacos are a must-try! Craving authentic Mexican food? Get your fill at **Café Coyote** in Old Town, which has preserved a slice of early California colonial life for visitors to enjoy. For a memorable fine dining experience head to **Loews Coronado Bay Resort** and let Chef de Cuisine Patrick Ponsaty at Mistral treat your taste buds to Mediterranean food done with a French flair. He gathers fresh herbs every morning from the resort's organic garden for that evening's offerings.



Biking in La Jolla.

DO

Load everyone up for a trip to **Balboa Park** and the **San Diego Zoo**. From July 21 through August 21 the San Diego Zoo Safari Park lets you experience Summer Safari: An African Experience. This festive summer celebration includes acrobats, artisans and Ethiopian circus performers who entertain guests through the Safari Park's village during the day.

If you're in town July 22–24, check out the hundreds of sand sculptors at work during the Annual **U.S. Open Sandcastle Competition** at Imperial Beach Pier. A parade, fireworks show, kid's sandcastle competition and street festival provide extra entertainment and family fun. Multi-taskers can learn all about the area while getting from place to place with a hop-on hop-off **Old Town Trolley** tour pass.

Make time to drive out to **La Jolla**, the tony coastal town just 20 minutes north of downtown San Diego. There you can schedule an all-downhill bike tour that starts at the top of Mt. Soledad and descends to Pacific Beach.

Find even more to do in San Diego at SanDiego.org.

Ultimate Urban Experience

Do you have a friend with a significant birthday on the horizon? Consider celebrating 39 (we won't tell it's for the second time) with a long weekend stay in downtown San Diego.

STAY

Book a suite or loft big enough to share at one of the many lux downtown hotels. The **Sé San Diego** offers a Girlfriend's Getaway package that includes a one night stay in a Cityside guestroom with two beds, \$300 credit for spa treatments, followed by Spatinis and appetizers in the luxurious Sè Spa, two \$50 Nordstrom gift cards for shopping at **Horton Plaza** (just one block from the hotel) and overnight valet parking. Book three rooms or more and receive a VIP cabana at no additional charge in Sè's hip pool lounge, Siren, for the evening!



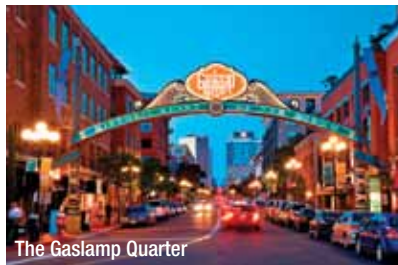
The lobby of the Sé San Diego.

EAT

Go girly for breakfast, lunch or dinner at **Café Chloe**, a Paris-inspired bistro with yummy sweet and savory options. Share gourmet pizzas and tapas on the patio of **Sammy's Woodfired Pizza** located in the hip downtown Gaslamp Quarter. Get your fix of fresh seafood at **The Fish Market**, which has beautiful bay front dining rooms.



The Ivy Rooftop offers some of the best views in the city.



The Gaslamp Quarter

DO

Don your glitziest shoes and fiercest dress before hitting the area's high (literally) profile hot spots. With multiple rooftop bars to choose from, such as the **Ivy Rooftop**, the **Altitude Skybar** and the **Jbar at Hotel Salomar**, San Diego's nightlife options deliver swanky atmospheres with stellar views.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Take It Easy in The Big Easy

BY MIMI GREENWOOD

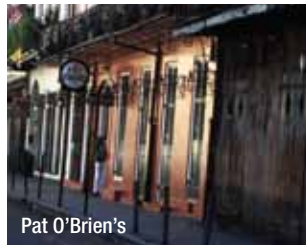
A LANGUID AFTERNOON IN THE NEW ORLEANS FRENCH QUARTER IS A FEAST FOR THE SENSES AND A SONATA FOR THE SOUL. THE REST OF THE CITY ISN'T BAD EITHER. BATHED IN THE CULTURAL INFLUENCES OF FRANCE, SPAIN, AFRICA, THE CARIBBEAN AND EARLY NATIVE PEOPLES, NEW ORLEANS OFFERS A UNIQUE CREOLIZATION OF CULTURES NOT FOUND ANYWHERE ELSE.

This cultural gumbo has produced world-renowned musicians, artists, authors and chefs—visionaries who changed the way we look at food, music, literature and art forever. Each year thousands of visitors make their way to The City that Care Forgot attracted by its history, charm and laissez-faire attitude. If you don't yet "know what it means to miss New Orleans," this might be the summer to find out. Whether you're looking for a romantic getaway or a lively family vacation, The Crescent City's got it going on.

Deep Southern Love

With its delicate French architecture, steamy climate and sultry jazz, New Orleans is the most romantic city this side of Venus. Stroll the cobble-stone streets of the Quarter. Slip down the Muddy Mississippi aboard a paddlewheel steamer, or snuggle close on a horse-drawn carriage ride. Enjoy authentic jazz at **Preservation Hall** and the **Old Absinthe House**. Then amble down one-of-a-kind Bourbon Street to **Pat O'Brien's**—a Pat O's hurricane is compulsory for all first-time visitors!

If antiquing is your thing, find that one-of-a-kind treasure on **Magazine Street** to remember your romantic New Orleans vacation for years to come. Take in an artsy film at historic, one-screen **Prytania Theater**. Then finish off your romantic evening with ice cream from the **Creole Creamery** or a cocktail at **The Columns Hotel**, the setting of the bordello in the movie *Pretty Baby*.



Pat O'Brien's



The Cornstalk Inn



Famous French Quarter balconies.



St. Louis Cathedral



Live street music is a regular occurrence.

STAY

In a city with so much history, bed and breakfast options abound. From French Quarter mansions to Uptown bungalows, it's hard to go wrong for charm and hospitality. A short streetcar ride from the French Quarter, the Superdome, the Zoo and Tulane and Loyola Universities, **Avenue Inn** on oak-lined St. Charles Avenue is delicious. Or if you'd rather be in the heart of French Quarter activity, consider the 19th century **Bourbon Orleans Hotel**. (Be sure to inquire about the resident ghosts.) For romance, check out the boutique hotel **The Cornstalk Inn**. With its signature comstalk fence, opulent French architecture and intimate French Quarter style courtyard, it's truly a New Orleans icon. See more at ExperienceNewOrleans.com.

The French Quarter



DO

There's only one place to begin your New Orleans adventure—at its ever-pulsing heart, the **French Quarter**. Along its centuries-old cobblestone streets, you'll encounter street performers, open-air artists and quaint shops brimming with antique toys, vintage clothing, estate jewelry, original artwork and more. History buffs won't want to miss the **St. Louis Cathedral** circa 1794, the **Cabildo** (where the Louisiana Purchase was signed in 1803), and the **Official Jazz Museum**. Find out more at VieuxCarre.org.



View the rest of The Crescent City aboard its moving National Historic Monument, the **St. Charles Avenue Streetcar**, offering 13 miles of sites, sounds and smells unique to New Orleans. Visit **The Aquarium of the Americas**, rated among the five best aquariums in the United States, the **National D Day Museum** (which Congress designated the country's official World War II Museum) and the lovely **Audubon Zoo** featuring 58 acres of authentic habitats for 1,300 animals from all parts of the globe. For more information and a complete calendar of summer festivals, see more at NewOrleansCVB.com.

EAT

It's hard to throw a rock in New Orleans and not hit an outstanding restaurant (300 in the French Quarter alone!).

For formal dining, try **Commander's Palace** in the Uptown Garden District or **Court of Two Sisters** in the Quarter. Both offer phenomenal food, strolling jazz bands and Court of Two Sisters boasts the largest historic courtyard in the Vieux Carré.

Or get down and dirty with a traditional N'awlins po' boy from Mother's or muffaletta from historic **Central Grocery**. Whatever you choose, top it off with beignets and café au lait from **Café du Monde**. The morning after, enjoy a traditional jazz brunch at **Brennan's** or **Mr. B's**, both in the Quarter. Find them all, plus pricing and dress codes, at NewOrleansOnline.com.

Breakfast at Café du Monde.



City Park

NOLA FOR FAMILIES

There's plenty for families to do in The Big Easy too. By day take in the lush 1,300-acre City Park, including the New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans Botanical Gardens and Storyland. By night cheer on Zephyr's baseball and VooDoo arena football. With its 30,000 square feet of hands-on, interactive exhibits, The Louisiana Children's Museum makes art, music, math, science and health fun for all ages.

Blane Kern's Mardi Gras World is the next best thing to Carnival itself. And the kids will want to tell their friends they ate a bug at The Audubon Insectarium. Or bowl and dance the night away at the famous Rock and Bowl. To work off some of the rich food you're bound to eat, rent bikes at Bicycle Michael's on Frenchmen Street and take a spin through the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden. Find much more at NewOrleansKids.com.

PURCHASING THE PERFECT GETAWAY

BY PAMELA HAMMONDS

OPTIONS FOR OWNING A SECOND HOME CAN VARY GREATLY. FROM A CONDO ON THE BEACH TO AN RV YOU DRIVE TO WHEREVER YOU DESIRE, YOU HAVE MANY FACTORS TO CONSIDER. HERE'S A PRIMER OF SOME POPULAR PICKS.

You love your home, but sometimes a change of scenery does wonders for everyone. If holing up in a hotel, tripping over suitcases and taking turns in a bathroom the size of a phone booth doesn't sound like a terribly appealing alternative, owning a vacation home might be the perfect option. Before you begin your search for the perfect property, consider several factors:

- ➔ Will I enjoy coming to this same location for years to come?
- ➔ Can I trust other people to occupy it while I'm not there to help offset the cost?
- ➔ Will I have to depend on rental income to meet the expense of ownership?
- ➔ Can I afford to maintain the property?
- ➔ Will the property suit our family's diverse interests?
- ➔ Should I decide to sell it later, will the property appeal to future buyers?
- ➔ Is the property easily accessible so I'll use it frequently?

Mountain Cabin

If your family's idea of a getaway includes hiking trails, fishing upstream or skiing slopes, a mountain-side retreat is calling your name. A mountain cabin can be rustic or luxurious, depending on how you define getting-away-from-it-all.

A three-story log cabin listed on RealEstateBlueRidge.com almost had us packing the Deep Woods OFF! and shopping for hiking boots. Situated on 2.35 acres on Georgia's Paris Mountain, the 2.5-bath, three-bedroom home is listed for \$168K.



Beach House

A week at the beach just never seems long enough, but before you consider buying your own beach-front property remember these two words: natural disasters. Or better yet, how about man-made disasters? From hurricanes to oil spills, many variables can make owning a beach house a nightmare. That said, if you've always dreamed of a beach house, now might be the time to snag the deal of a lifetime. Also keep in mind that beach front, beach access and beach view all mean different things and can affect the price.

On Zillow.com we spied a gorgeous ocean-front five-bedroom, six-bathroom, 3684-square-foot single family home in Orange Beach, Alabama for \$1.2 million and a charming 1700-square-foot bungalow on South Padre Island for \$835K.



RV

Your grandparents' motor home looked nothing like what's available for you to own today. You can travel in ultimate luxury and rock-star style in an RV. Things to consider: The cost of gas, options for parking one (even Disney World has a sweet campground), how many drivers your family has, and the talent it takes to maneuver one at stops.

Listings we viewed on [CampingWorld.com](#) included a new Winnebago Tour for \$379K (with stainless steel appliances, fireplace and central vac!) or a 36-foot Dutchmen Denali travel trailer for \$30K with a queen bed, sofa bed and bunks plus full kitchen and bath.



Lake House

Lake houses can be situated near a lake or have direct water access. Things to consider: The appeal of coming during winter months—for you or renters plus extra costs such as a boat, jet ski and dock maintenance or storage.

Listings we found on [LakeHouse.com](#) included a two-bath, two-bedroom, 1525-square-foot home on Lake Bridgeport (in north Texas) for \$299K and a four-bath, four-bedroom, 3400-square-foot home (on 1.3 acres) on Caddo Lake (in Louisiana).

Timeshare/Partial Ownership

If you're not ready to plunge into exclusive vacation ownership but like the idea of investing in a property, options include purchasing a time share or owning a property with another individual or a group of people.

Timeshares are vacation properties in which jointly-owned individual units allow each co-owner interval access. As an owner, you 'share' your unit with other owners, typically in seven-day increments. Disadvantages include not having 100 percent access to your unit and some come with high maintenance fees and other

costs. On the plus side, your timeshare might be part of a vacation club which allows you to vacation at other properties. Or your resort might allow you, as an owner, to rent additional time at a reduced rate.

Perhaps you have the good fortune of knowing another family or relative who shares your interests, values, work ethic, tastes and desires. Maybe co-owning a vacation property (or even an RV) might make perfect sense. Be sure to get everything in writing before you commit and openly discuss your reservations. Two-party investments gone bad can quickly ruin a friendship or divide a family.

MI CASA ES SU CASA

If you're willing to let others share your humble abode, online options abound that offer (for a fee, of course) to find renters to offset your costs of second-home ownership. A few include:

VRBO.com

Established in 1995, Vacation Rentals by Owner was founded by vacation rental owners who self-manage their second homes. For an annual fee, you can list your property along with 150,000+ rentals in over 100 countries worldwide. The site boasts members receiving an average 90 inquiries per year with more than 95 million travelers visiting the site each year.

VacationHomes.com

This self-proclaimed world leader in vacation rentals provides lodging options in over 1,100 vacation destinations worldwide. They make it easy for vacationers to find your cozy cabin, luxurious beach house, quaint chalet, or comfortable cottage with a customized search engine that will guide specific clients (e.g. those without pets or children) to you.

VacationsByOwner.com

For a listing fee of \$99 per year, VBO will internationally market your property and let you contact renters directly via email and/or phone. Also, your membership will provide you with free timeshare opportunities within the member network. There are neither hidden marketing charges nor commission fees.