

VISIT FLORIDA: UK Media Mission
Digital Media Kit Assets

THE HEART OF FLORIDA'S
**EMERALD
COAST**

DESTIN | FT. WALTON BEACH
OKALOOSA ISLAND

6 Hi-Res Photos:



2 Press Releases: One adventure themed, the other what's new?

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Explore the Great Outdoors of Florida's Emerald Coast
Adventure abounds in Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island

DESTIN-FORT WALTON BEACH-OKALOOSA ISLAND, Fla. (March 15, 2018) – Destin, Fort Walton Beach, and Okaloosa Island offer some of the greatest outdoor adventures and Florida recreation. The area's more than 20 miles of shoreline consists of sugar-white sand beaches, emerald-green water, and a portion of the pristine Gulf Islands National Seashore, plus protected bays and bayous, five beachfront parks, and 12 beach access ways with plenty of opportunities for visitors to explore, swim and play. From sport fishing and boating, to snorkeling and diving, to birding and wildlife viewing, to golfing and watersports galore, there's no shortage of fun to be had in the great outdoors of Florida's Emerald Coast.

The sugar-white sand and vibrant emerald-green waters are the focal point of any getaway here. Amazing sea life can be seen in the water while paddle boarding, snorkeling or walking along the pier. Visitors can enjoy seeing dancing dolphins, loggerhead sea turtles and other large fish, which are all common along the shores of the destination. Intertwined among its beautiful beaches are protected preserves like Henderson Beach State Park, which features 6,000 square feet of shoreline and over a mile of walking trails, perfect for scouting out any number of other protected species in the preserve.

The 100-Fathom Curve draws nearer to Destin than to any other spot on the Gulf Coast, providing for the quickest deep-water access on the Gulf, which attracts one of the widest arrays of marine life in Florida. Come explore artificial reefs, wrecks and a limestone shelf at depths of up to 90 feet. Many local dive shops offer lessons, certification classes and a wide variety of excursion activities. Choose from any number of local area purveyors to take a sail, go snorkeling, shelling, snuba or scuba diving in the Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island's beautiful emerald green waters.

Home to the largest fishing fleet in the U.S., if you've ever wanted to go deep-sea fishing, now's your chance. While many know Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island for the family-friendly beaches and activities of the area, fishermen have long known the destination for its near guarantee of a good catch. From the depths of the breathtaking Gulf of Mexico to the sleepy bayous, beautiful sound and pristine waters of the Choctawhatchee Bay, there is an abundance of fish to be caught here year-round.

Nature lovers flock to the beaches, waters and parks of the Emerald Coast every year to go bird watching, hiking and dolphin watching. Nearly 60 percent of the beach in this area is preserved in perpetuity. There's no shortage of lush foliage to admire while experiencing the beauty of ancient forests, pristine estuaries and majestic shorelines. Explore the stunning beaches of Okaloosa Island, the Gulf Island National Seashore or the Choctawhatchee Bay. Hike or kayak at Turkey Creek Park or Fred Gannon Rocky Bayou State Park, where there are freshwater rivers and bayous.

Sunny skies, coastal breezes and lush landscapes make Destin, Fort Walton Beach, and Okaloosa Island a paradise for golfers of all skill levels, year-round. From challenging links designed by world-renowned architects to panoramic enticements engineered by Mother Nature, visitors will have a great time golfing at any of the destinations eight championship golf courses and country clubs.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island: What's New in 2018
New amusements, accommodations, restaurants, groups & meeting space

DESTIN-FORT WALTON BEACH-OKALOOSA ISLAND, Fla. (March 5, 2018) – Okaloosa County is the perfect place to create lifelong memories. There's always something happening on the sugar-white shores, and there's something for everyone. No matter what time of the year they come, visitors can expect amazing days on the beautiful emerald-green waters, delicious local fare in its restaurants, and events that offer the opportunity for families to connect and have fun.

Now, visitors to Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island have a lot more to look forward to in 2018. Along with enjoying world-class fishing, sugar-white beaches, fresh local seafood and championship golf courses, visitors will enjoy new amusements, accommodations, restaurants, groups and meeting spaces, and more. New additions to the Emerald Coast coming in 2018 include:

Accommodations

Candlewood Suites

Candlewood Suites is joining an exciting lineup of hotel accommodations in Fort Walton Beach. The 3-story hotel will offer 98 rooms located just west of downtown on Highway 98

Holiday Inn Express

Also expected to open in 2018 is the Holiday Inn Express. This 4-story hotel featuring 95 rooms will offer guests a wonderful location near downtown Fort Walton Beach and the beautiful beaches of Okaloosa Island.

Groups & Meeting Space

The Emerald Coast Convention Center

The recently remodeled Emerald Coast Convention Center saw \$465,000 worth of renovations completed in January. Inside the Convention Center, you'll find 35,000 square feet of flexible, ideal meeting and event space featuring the latest improvements, which include carpet throughout the facility, 2,000 new chairs, an equipment-charging station, new interior paint and upgraded audio/visual equipment.

Restaurants

Cuvee Kitchen & Wine Bar

From the innovative minds that brought Destin Jackacuda's Seafood and Sushi, and Brotula's Seafood House & Steamer comes Cuvee Kitchen and Wine Bar. The name 'Cuvee' is not new in Destin, but this incarnation certainly is! Located in what was previously known as Chef Tim Creehan's Cuvee Bistro, this new and updated restaurant features a seasonal, handcrafted menu, premium seafood and farm fresh ingredients.

Half Shell Oyster House

Known for serving up local Gulf oysters, the Half Shell Oyster House is the newest seafood addition to the Emerald Coast. If oysters aren't for you, don't worry; you can also choose from fish, shrimp and even lobster. Land lovers will enjoy their sumptuous steaks, as well as pasta offerings. There's even a gluten free menu!

Bella Sera Bistro

Featuring expansive views of the Destin harbor, as well as an incredible wine list, Bella Sera Bistro is the newest restaurant to open at Harborwalk Village. Located just above Crab Island Cantina, here you can enjoy a decadent meal before taking a stroll along the harbor and delighting in the many activities and events of the village.

Attractions

Wild Willy's Adventure Zone – Expansion

You already know and love Wild Willy's Adventure Zone on Okaloosa Island. With its ropes course, mini-golf, arcade and yummy yogurt and pizza shops, it's a one-stop shop for family fun during an Emerald Coast vacation in Fort Walton Beach. But, they aren't stopping there. Slated to open by October 2018, the expanded area of Wild Willy's will offer a variety of expanded attractions such as two go-cart tracks, bumper boats, merry-go-round and even a maze!

About the Emerald Coast:

The Emerald Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau is the official destination marketing organization for Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island. With more than 12,000 lodging accommodations at a variety of condominiums, hotels, resorts and private homes, the lifestyle is laid-back with traditional Southern charm. Visitors can enjoy more than 24 miles of sugar-white sand beaches, emerald-green waters, abundant watersport activities, championship golf, Gulf-to-Table seafood, lively nightlife and numerous indoor attractions designed to entertain all ages. Find us on Facebook at facebook.com/floridasemeraldcoast, Twitter [@EmeraldCoastFLA](https://twitter.com/EmeraldCoastFLA), Pinterest at pinterest.com/emeraldcoastfla, Instagram [@EmeraldCoastFLA](https://instagram.com/EmeraldCoastFLA) or visit the website at EmeraldCoastFL.com.

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Talking Points

Fast Facts: The Emerald Coast CVB (Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island)

The Heart of Florida's Emerald Coast

Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island make up the heart of Florida's [Emerald Coast](#). Known for sugar-white sand, emerald-green water, and long sunny days, the Emerald Coast is a fantastic year-round vacation destination. Whether you like to golf, want to try your hand at reeling in 'the big one', or simply want to toss your towel on the sand for a few hours of relaxation, you can find that, and so much more, along the beautiful beaches of Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island.

Destin is known as the 'World's Luckiest Fishing Village' and it is just that – a fishing village. Except, over the years, it has grown to also include attractions, events and shopping. Here, you can enjoy fast-paced watersports, fly high above the water in a parasail, and ride the waves to shore on a paddleboard. You can also stroll the famous harbor, jump aboard a charter fishing boat and try your own luck at sea. Don't forget to take your catch to one of the many delicious [Gulf to Table](#) restaurants in town to have your fresh catch cooked for you!

Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island offer a slightly slower pace while still allowing you to enjoy the emerald water and white sand beaches of Northwest Florida that you've come to love. Enjoy long days on the sand, splash in your [Fort Walton Beach hotel](#) or condo pool, and then head out to the Boardwalk for a pickup game of volleyball. In the evenings, enjoy a scrumptious seafood dinner at one of the delicious restaurants on the island.

Sugar White Sand & Emerald Water

Yes, the sand in Destin, Fort Walton Beach and Okaloosa Island really is sugar white and powder soft. It's as brilliant as our photos depict – no Photoshop required! This is because the sand contains finely ground quartz crystal.

At the end of the last Ice Age, the world's temperatures began warming, icecaps began melting, and large volumes of water flowed from rivers to the world's oceans. The rising Apalachicola River, originating in the Appalachian Mountains, carried quartz particles down from the mountains into the Gulf of Mexico depositing them along our coast. Over time, the sea level rose and the quartz sand formed the shoreline.

This beautiful white sand remains cool even in the heat of summer and gives the water its trademark emerald color by reflecting sunlight back up through the surf.

So, why is Destin so lucky?

The underwater 100-fathom curve, where our relatively shallow waters drop to dramatic depths, is a miracle of nature. This curve draws closer in to Destin than to any other spot in Florida creating the speediest deep-water access on the Gulf, and therefore, the speediest access to fantastic deep-sea fishing. As a result, the [Destin Harbor](#) boasts not only the world's luckiest fishing fleet but also the nation's largest.

Popular, and delicious, catches in the area include various species of tuna, grouper and snapper. Blue marlin, cobia and pompano are also easy catches throughout our waters.

In addition to great fishing, the Emerald Coast also offers breathtaking diving. Various reef clusters reveal 4-foot basket sponges and purple sea whips, as well as vibrant yellow angelfish, 6-foot manta

rays and protected 350-pound sea turtles.

Activities, Attractions & Annual Events

More than 300 festivals and events take place along our coast each year. Below, find a sampling of what to expect each season. Visit our [Event Calendar](#) to see more of what's happening along the beach.

Spring

- Destin Cobia Tournament
- Kitty Hawk Kite Festival
- Fudpucker's Four-Player Volleyball Tournament

Summer

- Billy Bowlegs Festival
- Boat Week/Poker Run
- Paddle at the Porch

Fall

- Destin Seafood Festival
- Destin Fishing Rodeo
- Mattie Kelly Arts Festival
- Emerald Coast Classic

Winter

- Holiday on the Harbor/Christmas Boat Parade
- New Year's Eve Beach Ball Drop
- Bayou, Bay & Back Run
- Mardi Gras

ACTIVITIES

One thing you won't hear while on vacation to Florida's Emerald Coast is "I'm bored!" The coast is packed with [things to do](#), see and eat. Hit the water on jet-skis or a paddleboard. Sail above the emerald water in a parasail or fly high with a water-powered jet pack FlyBoard. Sink below the waves to visit with wildlife on a SNUBA or snorkeling adventure. Or climb aboard a dolphin cruise, charter boat or even a pirate ship to sail the seas.

Off the water, stay cool with a visit to our local [water park in Destin](#), Big Kahuna's. Or, take a break from the heat yet still enjoy the sunshine at fantastic open-air shopping destinations such as Destin Commons and the Silver Sands Premium Outlets. Museums and activity centers, such as the Destin History & Fishing Museum, Indian Temple Mound Museum and Emerald Coast Science Center, are not only educational and interesting, but fun indoor options if you need a little beach break.

Delicious, local dining is available for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and we always recommend the seafood! Stroll the Destin harbor or visit the Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island to take in a great view and some fun with your meal. To taste truly fresh, Gulf-sourced fish fare, visit one of our [Gulf to Table restaurants](#).