

EXPLORE *Real Florida*

OUR LOCAL APPROVED GUIDE



Hiking Trails



Camping & Paddling



Beaches & Boating



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OUR TOP 10 HIKING TRAILS

Hammocks • Beaches • Wetlands • Prairies

Florida's Gulf Coast offers some of the most diverse hiking environments in the state — from shaded coastal hammocks and open prairies to mangrove wetlands and pristine beaches. Whether you're looking for wildlife, scenery, or solitude, these trails showcase the best of West Coast Florida.

Hammock & Forest Trails

Withlacoochee State Trail – Rolling terrain through hardwood hammocks, river crossings, and wetlands (multi-section trail).

Collier–Seminole State Park – Mangrove forests, pine flatwoods, and historic boardwalk trails.

Punta Gorda Nature Park – Peaceful harbor-side trails through coastal hammock and wetlands.

Beach & Coastal Trails

Caladesi Island State Park – Coastal island hiking through dunes, mangroves, and untouched Gulf beaches.

St. Joseph Peninsula State Park – Maritime hammock, bayfront trails, and sugar-sand shoreline hikes.

Gulf Islands National Seashore (Perdido Key) – Dune systems, coastal scrub, and expansive beach walks.

Wetland & Prairie Trails

Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park – Wet prairie and pine flatwoods known for rare plants and wildlife.

Coastal Prairie Trail (Everglades – Gulf Coast) – Wide-open prairie transitioning into mangroves and coastal wetlands.

Sandfly Island Trail (Everglades NP) – Short island hike ideal for birding and coastal views.

Scenic Connector Trails

Good Neighbor Trail (Brooksville) – Easy-grade scenic route linking forests, wetlands, and the Withlacoochee Trail.

Know Before You Go

- Best Season: Fall through spring
- Bring: Water, sun protection, bug spray
- Wildlife: Alligators, birds, and native species are common — stay alert and on marked trails

OUR TOP 10 CAMPGROUNDS

Florida's Gulf Coast is home to some of the most highly rated campgrounds in the Southeast, offering everything from beachfront camping and coastal dunes to riverfront forests and remote island sites. These campgrounds consistently rank at the top for cleanliness, location, scenery, and guest satisfaction.

Beach & Coastal Campgrounds

Fort De Soto Park Campground – Waterfront sites, calm bay waters, fishing piers, and award-winning beaches.

Grayton Beach State Park – Iconic white sand beaches, dune lakes, and shaded campsites under live oaks.

Topsail Hill Preserve State Park – Coastal dune lakes, quiet beaches, and resort-style campground amenities.

Turtle Beach Campground – Walk-to-the-beach camping on Siesta Key with clean facilities and easy access.

Island & Primitive Camping

Cayo Costa State Park – Remote island camping with untouched beaches, shelling, and true off-grid adventure (boat access only).

Shell Key Preserve (Primitive) – Secluded barrier island camping for experienced, self-sufficient campers.

River, Springs & Forest Campgrounds

Chassahowitzka River Campground – Riverside camping with crystal-clear spring access, kayaking, and wildlife encounters.

Seven Sisters Campground – Family-friendly, shaded campground near springs and nature preserves in Homosassa.

Oscar Scherer State Park – Quiet forest campground with trails, birding, and central Gulf Coast access.

Hidden Gems & Laid-Back Favorites

Indian Pass Campground – Low-key Gulf Coast camping on the Forgotten Coast, known for sunsets, fishing, and peaceful vibes.

Good to Know

Best Season: Fall through spring

Reservations: Many sites book months in advance

Camping Styles: Tent, RV, waterfront, and primitive options available

Wildlife: Expect birds, dolphins, manatees, and coastal species

OUR TOP 10 NATURAL SPRINGS

Crystal Clear • Spring-Fed • Iconic Gulf Coast Experiences

Florida's west coast is home to some of the most celebrated natural springs in the country, known for constant 72° water, incredible clarity, and rich wildlife. These springs are favorites for swimming, paddling, snorkeling, and nature viewing.

💎 Signature & Iconic Springs

Weeki Wachee Springs – First-magnitude spring with emerald water, spring-fed river, and legendary Florida charm.

Three Sisters Springs (Crystal River) – World-famous manatee refuge with stunning clarity and kayak access.

Homosassa Springs – Natural spring habitat known for manatees, wildlife viewing, and underwater observatory.

🌊 River & Paddling Springs

Chassahowitzka Springs – Spring clusters feeding a scenic river system, ideal for kayaking and wildlife encounters.

Manatee Springs State Park – Powerful spring flowing into the Suwannee River, great for swimming, tubing, and snorkeling.

Fanning Springs State Park – Relaxed, family-friendly spring with clear water and easy access.

🌿 Hidden Gems & Local Favorites

Lithia Springs – Spring-fed swimming hole near Tampa Bay feeding the Alafia River.

Suwannee Springs – Historic riverside springs with limestone pools and peaceful surroundings.

Rainbow Springs – Brilliant blue water, river tubing, and lush spring gardens.

🌐 Unique Gulf Coast Feature

Mud Hole Spring – Rare offshore submarine spring beneath the Gulf of Mexico, supporting unique marine ecosystems.

📍 Know Before You Go

Water Temp: ~72°F year-round

Best Time: Spring & fall (manatees peak in winter)

Activities: Swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, tubing

Wildlife: Manatees, fish, turtles, birds

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OUR TOP 10 BEACHES

Sugar Sand • Clear Water • Iconic Gulf Sunsets

Florida's Gulf Coast is known worldwide for its powder-soft sand, calm turquoise waters, and unforgettable sunsets. These beaches consistently rank among the best for beauty, accessibility, and overall experience.

Iconic & Award-Winning Beaches

Siesta Key Beach – Famous quartz-crystal sand, wide shoreline, and vibrant nearby village.

Clearwater Beach – Lively atmosphere with calm waters, Pier 60 sunsets, and walkable attractions.

St. Pete Beach – Classic Gulf Coast beach with resorts, restaurants, and long stretches of soft sand.

Natural & Scenic Favorites

Caladesi Island State Park – Pristine barrier island beach accessible by ferry or kayak; untouched and peaceful.

Fort De Soto Beach – Expansive beaches with historic fort views, trails, and excellent shelling.

Grayton Beach State Park – White sand dunes, coastal dune lakes, and a laid-back natural vibe.

Hidden Gems & Laid-Back Escapes

Anna Maria Island (Coquina & Bean Point) – Old Florida charm with clear water and postcard sunsets.

Pass-a-Grille Beach – Quiet, walkable shoreline at the southern tip of St. Pete Beach with historic character.

Indian Rocks Beach – Relaxed local favorite with fewer crowds and beautiful Gulf views.

Unspoiled Gulf Coast Experience

Cape San Blas – Wide, uncrowded beaches on Florida's Forgotten Coast with stunning sunsets and wildlife.

Good to Know

Best Time to Visit: Spring & fall

Water: Calm, warm Gulf waters ideal for swimming

Sand: Fine, white quartz sand stays cool underfoot

Vibe: From lively beach towns to remote natural escape

OUR TOP 10 BOAT RAMPS

Best Access • Boater-Approved • Gulf, Bay & River Launches

Florida's Gulf Coast offers exceptional boating access — from deep-water Gulf launches to protected bay and river ramps. These boat ramps are widely regarded for location, ease of use, parking, and access to prime boating waters.

Gulf & Barrier Island Access

Fort De Soto Boat Ramp (St. Petersburg) – One of Florida's best-known launches with access to Tampa Bay, the Gulf, and nearby islands.

Clearwater Memorial Causeway Boat Ramp – Easy access to Clearwater Harbor and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

Honeymoon Island / Dunedin Causeway Ramp – Popular for Gulf access, fishing, and island hopping.

Bay & Intracoastal Favorites

Maximo Park Boat Ramp (St. Petersburg) – Excellent access to Tampa Bay with multiple lanes and large parking area.

War Veterans' Memorial Boat Ramp (St. Pete Beach) – Well-maintained ramp with direct access to Boca Ciega Bay.

Belleair Causeway Boat Ramp – Convenient access to Clearwater Harbor and surrounding waterways.

River, Springs & Backcountry Launches

Chassahowitzka River Boat Ramp – Gateway to spring-fed rivers, mangroves, and Gulf backwaters.

Homosassa Springs Public Boat Ramp – Direct access to Homosassa River, springs, and Gulf fishing grounds.

Weeki Wachee River Boat Ramp – Ideal for river boating, paddling, and spring-fed excursions.

Forgotten Coast Standout

Indian Pass Boat Ramp (Port St. Joe) – Laid-back Gulf Coast launch with access to bays, fishing flats, and uncrowded waters.

Good to Know

Best Conditions: Early mornings & weekdays

Parking: Some ramps require permits or have trailer limits

Tides: Check tide and wind before Gulf launches

Courtesy: Prepare boats before launch to keep ramps moving

OUR TOP 10 SANDBARS

Boat-In • Shallow Water • Iconic Gulf Coast Hangouts

Florida's Gulf Coast is famous for its shallow, clear-water sandbars — perfect for anchoring, swimming, and socializing by boat. These sandbars are consistently ranked favorites for location, scenery, and overall boating experience.

Iconic & Social Sandbars

Beer Can Island (Longboat Key / Jewfish Key) – Legendary boat-in sandbar with crystal-clear water and a lively atmosphere.

Whiskey Joe's Sandbar (Tampa Bay) – Popular gathering spot near Old Tampa Bay, especially on weekends.

Egmont Key Sandbar – Historic island sandbars with turquoise water at the mouth of Tampa Bay.

Natural & Scenic Favorites

Shell Key Preserve Sandbars – Shallow flats with white sand, shelling, and calm water near Tierra Verde.

Honeymoon Island / Dunedin Causeway Sandbar – Easy access, family-friendly shallows, and island views.

Pass-a-Grille Sandbar – Calm, clear water near the southern tip of St. Pete Beach with stunning sunsets.

Laid-Back & Local Gems

Anna Maria Island Sandbar (Longboat Pass) – Clear water, dolphin sightings, and relaxed boating vibes.

Caladesi Island Sandbars – Pristine, undeveloped sand flats near one of Florida's best beaches.

John's Pass Sandbar – Protected waters with nearby dining, shops, and boat traffic excitement.

Forgotten Coast Favorite

St. George Island Sandbars – Wide, natural sandbars with shallow Gulf water and minimal crowds.

Good to Know

Best Time: Mid-to-low tide for exposed sand

Weekends: Expect crowds at popular spots

Rules: Anchor responsibly and respect seagrass

Safety: Watch tides, weather, and boat traffic

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Outdoors & Explore



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