



Pensacola Area Real Florida Guide

In Florida's panhandle, vibrant [Pensacola](#) stakes its claim as the oldest European settlement in the United States. Many do not know that Pensacola predates St. Augustine (1565) and Jamestown, VA (1607). When Europeans first visited the northern Gulf of Mexico in the early 1500s, they found Native American settlements that were populous and thriving. Along the Gulf of Mexico, discovery by Europeans was followed by a long struggle for the region's control. Spain, in 1559, established a settlement in Florida on Pensacola Bay, but the place was abandoned soon afterward. Spaniards revived the settlement in 1698, surrendered it to the French in 1719, regained it by treaty in 1722, ceded it to the English in 1763, and repossessed it by force in 1781!

To fully immerse in the area's fascinating layers of history and culture, plan on spending several days and allow time to savor the dazzling beauty of the sugar-sand beaches. [Visit Pensacola](#) shares information about lodging, dining and more. Beautiful [Big Lagoon State Park](#) makes an excellent base for camping and exploring the area; make a reservation [here](#). For a taste of exciting activities and attractions in Pensacola, check out these local [adventures](#).

This suggested itinerary begins at Big Lagoon State Park southwest of Pensacola, explores exciting features at the Navy Base, then touches down in the historic downtown area, and ends at Gulf Islands National Seashore and Pensacola Beach. You can pick and choose among any of these highlights to create your own unforgettable Pensacola adventure.

Day 1, Explore Florida's Award-Winning State Parks. Spend a day or two sampling the natural





beauty of these three coastal parks with a wide array of recreation options:

Big Lagoon State Park (1), 12301 Gulf Beach Highway, Pensacola, has 655 upland acres separating the mainland from Perdido Key and the Gulf of Mexico. Natural communities, ranging from saltwater marshes to pine flatwoods, attract a wide variety of birds, especially during the spring and fall migrations, while the beaches, shallow bays, nature trails and open woodlands offer splendid opportunities for nature study. The park also beckons visitors to camp, swim, fish, boat, canoe and hike. Crabbing in the shallow waters of Big Lagoon is a popular activity as well. Big Lagoon State Park is a Gateway for the [Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail](#) where visitor's can loan binoculars from the visitor's center at no charge to view the area's amazing wildlife.

Perdido Key State Park (2), 15301 Perdido Key Drive, Pensacola, 32507, is on a 247-acre barrier island southwest of Pensacola on the Gulf of Mexico. Barrier islands fringing the coastline protect the Florida mainland from the harsh effects of storms and provide habitats for shorebirds and other coastal animals. White sand beaches and rolling dunes covered with sea oats make Perdido Key a favorite destination for swimmers and sunbathers. Surf fishing is another popular activity. Boardwalks from the parking lot allow visitors to access the beach without causing damage to the fragile dunes and beach vegetation. Covered picnic tables overlooking the beach provide a great place for family outings.

Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park (3) 12301 Gulf Beach Highway, Pensacola, 32507, is home to four species of endangered pitcher plants, as well as other rare and endangered plant species. The rare, carnivorous white-top pitcher plant is unique to the Gulf Coast and found only between the Apalachicola and Mississippi rivers. Almost 100 other rare plants and animals depend on the wet prairie habitat, including the alligator snapping turtle, sweet pitcher plant, and Chapman's butterwort. A boardwalk offers visitors a view of the wild and beautiful Tarkiln Bayou. Visitors can enjoy a picnic and then take a



hike on the nature trails to observe the rare plants and wildlife.

Also in the area is the [Native Paths Cultural Heritage Museum](#), (4) Operated by the Perdido Bay Tribe of Southeastern Lower Muscogee Creek Indians, 3300 Beloved Path, Pensacola, 32507. The [Jones Swamp Wetland Preserve and Nature Trail](#) (5) 1131 Patton Drive, Pensacola, 32507.

Day 2, Marvel at Pensacola's Maritime Heritage:

The following attractions are located at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola, and visitors should review [general entry restrictions](#) before entering the base.

[Pensacola Lighthouse](#) (6), 2081 Radford Road, Pensacola, 32508. Climb 177 steps up the historic Pensacola Lighthouse & Museum for one of the most beautiful views on the Gulf Coast. Built in 1859, the top of the tower offers stunning views of Pensacola Pass (where Pensacola Bay meets the Gulf of Mexico), three forts, the Pensacola skyline and the historic Navy Yard. The fully restored Keepers' Quarters, built in 1869, is home to a museum with exhibits pertaining to the history of the lighthouse and the Naval Air Station and a gift shop.

The [National Naval Aviation Museum](#) (7), 1750 Radford Blvd, Pensacola 32508, is one of the most-visited museums in the state of Florida. Share the excitement of naval aviation's rich history and see more than 150 beautifully restored aircraft representing Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard Aviation. These historic aircraft are displayed both inside the huge museum and outside on its 37-acre grounds. Admission is free and hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pensacola is proud to call itself home to the renowned [Blue Angels](#), officially known as the U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron. Lucky visitors may catch them soaring in gravity-defying formations by viewing a practice [schedule](#). On Wednesday mornings at 11:30 a.m. from March through November, visitors have the opportunity to meet the pilots and take photos with them at the National



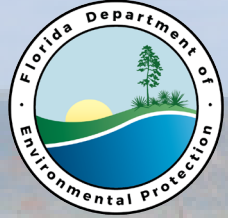
Naval Aviation Museum.

[Fort Barrancas](#) (8), 3182 Taylor Rd, Pensacola, 32508, sits on a bluff overlooking the entrance to Pensacola Bay. The natural advantages of this location have inspired engineers of three nations to build forts. The British built the Royal Navy Redoubt here in 1763 of earth and logs. The Spanish built two forts here around 1797. Bateria de San Antonio was a masonry water [battery](#) at the foot of the bluff. Above it was earth and log [Fort San Carlos de Barrancas](#). American engineers remodeled the Water Battery in 1840 and built a masonry fort on the bluff between 1839 and 1844, connected by a tunnel to the Water Battery. Scheduled tours of Fort Barrancas are every Saturday at 2:00 p.m. and at the [Advanced Redoubt](#) every Saturday at 11:00 a.m. In 1971, the structure became part of the Gulf Islands National Seashore; restoration of Fort Barrancas began in 1978. Fort Barrancas and the Visitor Center are open only on Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Day 3, Explore Pensacola's Historic Seville District (9) & Cruise the Scenic Bluffs Highway

The heart of [downtown](#) has a multitude of interesting places to shop, dine, and a treasure trove of history to explore all within a short walking distance along with frequent. Put on comfortable shoes and create your own fun-filled tour from the following options:

- The Pensacola [MESS Hall](#) (Math, Engineering, Science, & Stuff) is not a typical science museum, 116 N Tarragona St. Visitors get to work like real scientists, developing questions and creating experiments, engaging in complex reasoning and learning science just through tinkering. It's all hands-on science.
- Visit [Historic Pensacola Village](#), a collection of 27 properties in the Pensacola National Register Historic District. Eleven of these properties are interpreted facilities that are open to the public, open Tuesday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tickets



may be purchased at the Tivoli High House Shop, located at 205 E. Zaragoza Street in downtown. Guided tours of historic homes and buildings are offered three times daily at 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 2:30 p.m. Visitors will receive an in-depth tour of the [1805 French-Creole Lavelle House](#), the [1871 Dorr House](#), the [1832 Old Christ Church](#), and the [1890 Lear-Rocheblave House](#). Tour guides will lead guests past historic structures along

Zaragoza Street, highlighting significant architecture and local history. Walking Tours of the District and the 1825 Barkley House leave from the Tivoli High House at 2 pm and last 45-minutes. Every Saturday 'Living History' interpreters share early 19th century cooking techniques and trade-skills at the Historic Pensacola Village. Cooking takes place in an authentically recreated detached kitchen house using actual 18th and 19th century recipes while demonstrations include sewing, basket weaving, and wood working. Other interesting sites in the Historic Pensacola Village area include [Museum of Commerce](#), [Manuel Barrios Cottage](#), [Museum of Industry](#) and [Julee Cottage](#)

- [Pensacola Children's Museum](#), was designed to have interactive, imaginative, and educational play for all ages in the setting of a historical museum.
- Located in Historic Pensacola Village in downtown Pensacola, the [Colonial Archeological Trail](#), 330 S. Jefferson St., is a series of outdoor exhibits that feature Pensacola's colonial past. A brochure for the trail can be obtained at the Tivoli House in Historic Pensacola Village. The open-air archeology exhibits each have an explanatory metal marker and location map.



- [Quina House Museum](#), 204 South Alcaniz St., Built in 1810, the Quina House is Pensacola's oldest surviving house still located on its original site and is listed on national Historic Register. The historic home is furnished with pieces dating from 1790 through the 1880's with noteworthy items such as a horse hair-cloth sofa.
- [T. T. Wentworth Jr., State Museum](#), 330 S Jefferson St., was originally built in the early 1900s as City Hall, the Spanish Revival style building now serves the community with a treasure trove of artifacts displaying West Florida's rich heritage.

[Download the African-American Heritage Trail Guide \(10\)](#) which spotlights nearly two dozen stops, from Perdido Key to Century and from Pensacola Beach to historic downtown Pensacola featuring historic sites, churches, art galleries, cultural centers, restaurants and more. Also included in the guide are tributes to notable African-Americans in the community, an explanation of the role African-Americans played in the city's founding and other facts about the area's 450-year history.

[Pensacola Scenic Bluffs Highway \(11\)](#) offers an 11-mile driving tour with multiple points of interest along the eastern shore of Escambia Bay. From the southernmost terminus where moss-draped oaks and stately magnolias surround the US 90 Bridge over Bayou Texar, travelers drive north on US 90 atop the unique bluffs which provide views of Escambia Bay and represent the highest point along the entire coastline of Florida. The corridor continues through wetlands supporting a diversity of flora and fauna toward its northern terminus in tidal wetlands where U.S. 90 crosses the Escambia River.

At day's end choose a good site for sunset including [Plaza de Luna \(12\)](#), 900 S. Palafox St., [Community Maritime Park \(13\)](#), 301 W. Main St., or the William Bartram Memorial Park [\(14\)](#), 211 Bayfront Parkway.

Day 4, Visit Fort Pickens, Tour the 'Footprints in the Sand Eco-Trail' and Relax on the Beach:

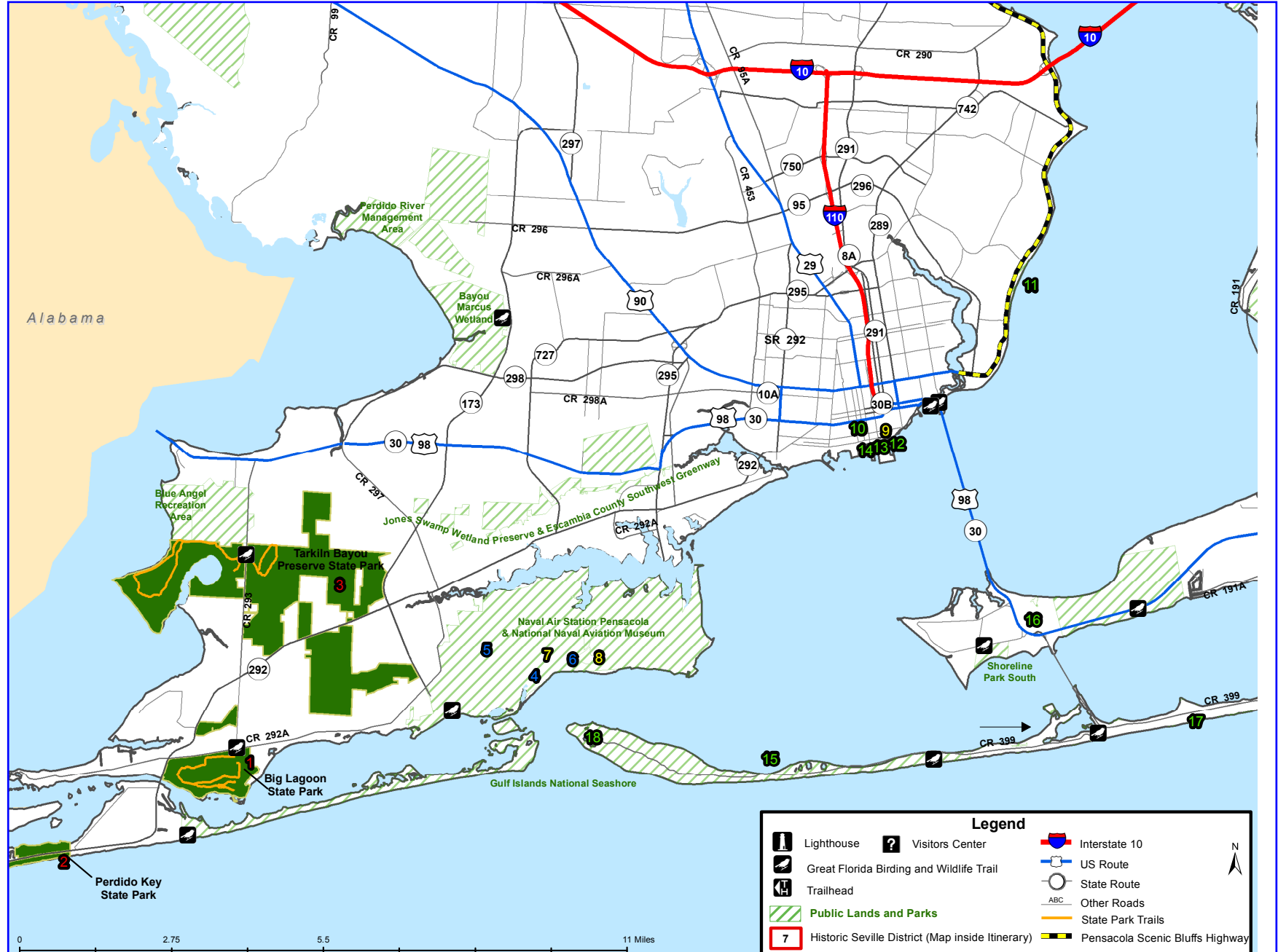
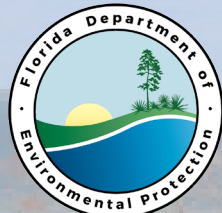


[Gulf Islands National Seashore \(15\)](#), 1801 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze, 32561. Millions of visitors are drawn to this pristine barrier island in search of white sandy beaches and aquamarine waters, a camping spot, an excellent place to fish or a tour of historic [Fort Pickens \(16\)](#), 1400 Fort Pickens Rd., Pensacola Beach, 32561.

The impressive [Florida National Scenic Trail](#) ends at Fort Pickens after winding nearly 1,300 miles from a starting point in the Big Cypress National Preserve. The fort was completed in 1834 and used until WWII, when modern weapons made traditional coastal defense obsolete. Fort Pickens has changed over the years, and a [self-guided tour](#) peels back the layers of history. Plaster-lined rooms that were intended as officers' quarters were later used to house Apache prisoners. The most famous resident, Geronimo, lived in identical rooms along the south wall, which have since collapsed.

Spending time on the white sands and aquamarine waters of beautiful [Pensacola Beach \(17\)](#) is not limited to swimming! A free trolley service operates during the summer season from end of May through Labor Day. From fishing off one of two piers to floating above the water while parasailing, Pensacola Beach has plenty of activities to choose from including swimming, surfing, diving, snorkeling, stand up paddle boarding, and a tour of the [Footprints in the Sand Eco-Trail \(18\)](#), western end GPS: 30.325525, -87.180713. On the trail, you'll learn about local plant and animal life including dolphins, turtles, sharks, birds, flowers, and fish. Informative, educational signs have been posted at key locations across the beach, each one exploring a different ecological topic. Many signs feature QR codes that you can scan with a mobile device to access more information online. You'll learn the secrets of Pensacola Beach's white sand, discover the dangerous journeys of sea turtles, identify mysterious seashells, and so much more.





Alabama

Perdido Key State Park

Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park

Blue Angel Recreation Area

Perdido River Management Area

Bayou Marcus Wetland

Gulf Islands National Seashore

Naval Air Station Pensacola & National Naval Aviation Museum

Jones Swamp Wetland Preserve & Escambia County Southwest Greenway

Shoreline Park South

Legend

- Lighthouse
- Visitors Center
- Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail
- Trailhead
- Public Lands and Parks
- Historic Seville District (Map inside Itinerary)
- Interstate 10
- US Route
- State Route
- Other Roads
- State Park Trails
- Pensacola Scenic Bluffs Highway