Navigator

KNOW-IT-ALL GUIDE

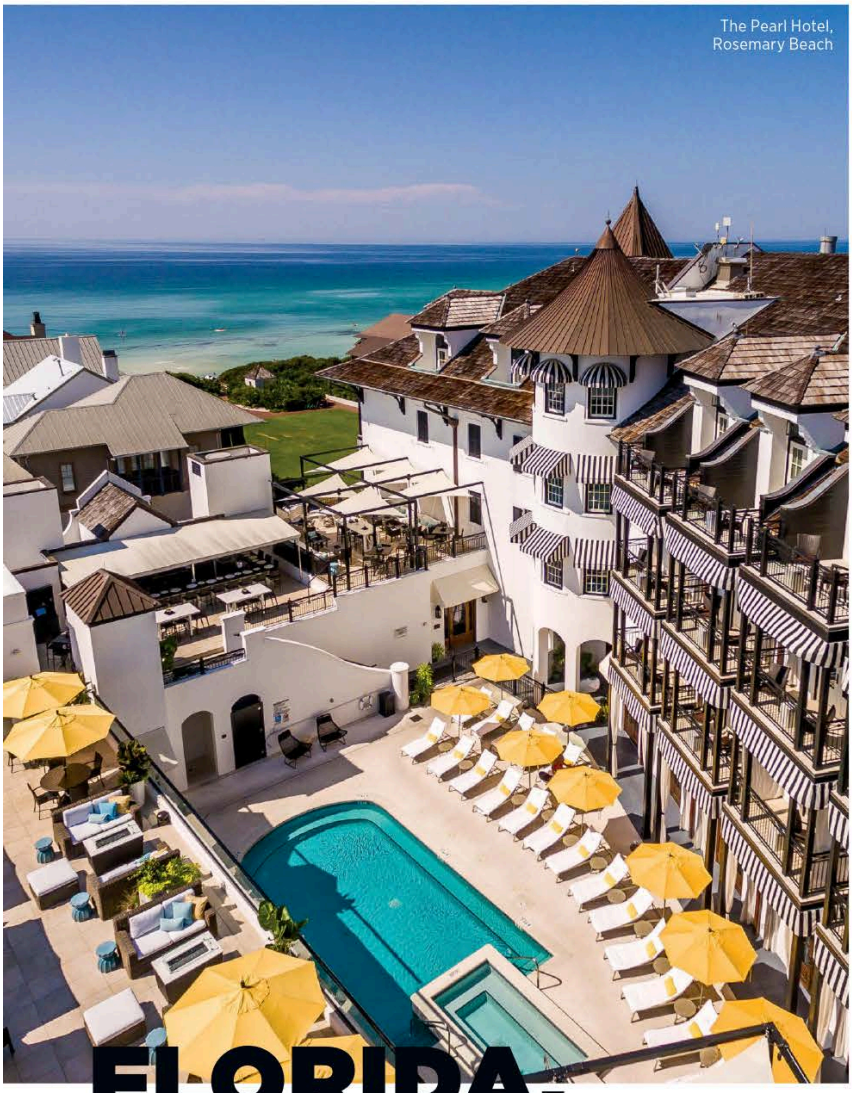
Eternal Sunshine

Buzzworthy restaurants, revamped resorts, quiet (for now) beach towns, and new direct flights from Philly make Florida an even more ideal escape from the cold.

edited by ERICA MOODY



SEASIDE



The Pearl Hotel, Rosemary Beach

FLORIDA, BUT HOLD THE CROWDS

With a trip to the Panhandle's stunning **30A BEACHES**, you'll experience everything you want—with none of what you don't.

We get it—you have reservations about spending your hard-earned PTO days at a beach named after a highway. But if there's ever a time to take a leap of faith, it's now: This stretch of Panhandle shoreline has a white sand/turquoise ocean combo that'll make you think you woke up in Jamaica, plus nearly new beachfront communities, pools, fishing, biking and quality eats.

What won't you find? The hordes of people or high prices of Miami.

This part of Florida has a reputation for being overrun with half-naked spring breakers because Panama City is nearby, but the **South Walton Highway** (a.k.a. 30A) that runs along the shoreline has been remade by savvy developers who nailed up some well-planned beachfront communities in the mid-1990s. You'll think you've discovered some clandestine tropical paradise, but the area has been a popular family destination for folks from Texas, Georgia and Louisiana for a while. In the past decade, **Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport** began accepting more high-season direct flights from East Coast cities like Philly. (Or, as one local told me, "Yup—the New Yorkers are coming.")

There are many towns to pick from, but tops on the list is **Rosemary Beach**. This tasteful mini town is less than 30 years old, so it benefits from smart planning: There are blocks of spacious, well-appointed rental homes (your Ocean City duplex this is not), neighborhood pools, a town center with shops and restaurants, a pristine greenspace programmed with live music and movie nights, and chair rentals at the beach. Once you're in Rosemary, you can bike and walk everywhere. If you aren't traveling with a group, stay at the upscale **Pearl**, a recently renovated hotel (rooms start at $509 in-season) that overlooks the Gulf of Mexico. Rosemary has reliable eating options, like **Lola Coastal Italian** for Neapolitan pizza, the **Summer Kitchen** for pancakes, and **CK Feed & Supply**, which is stocked with cocktail-hour essentials.

Just down 30A is **Alys Beach**, another newfangled neighborhood, this one with a Mediterranean feel. (It sounds cheesy but isn't.) Bike there in the morning for sweets from **Charlie's Donuts** or smoothie bowls from **Raw & Juicy**. Take a loop through the manicured streets of Alys to the bike trail. (We dare you to not instantly start Googling which houses are for sale.)

Continue down the road toward Destin to discover older beach towns. **Grayton Beach**, which is over 100 years old, has quaint, quirky cottages and a hippie vibe (think: Florida's Woodstock) and is a launching point for **deep-sea fishing charters**. And picturesque **Seaside**, which is where *The Truman Show* was filmed, has a little park with food trucks operating out of Airstreams. You'll find everything else you expect in the area**: dolphin-sighting trips**, **airboat rides**, **mangrove bike trails**, **golf** and **tennis**. It really makes for a laid-back trip—until the rest of the East Coast discovers it, that is. —*Ashley Primis*

THE PEARL HOTEL



Pappardelle alla lepre at Boia De, Miami

EATING MIAMI

From unlikely Michelin-starred finds to Cuban staples, don't skip these six Magic City spots.

BOIA DE

► Don't let the strip-mall location fool you; this intimate Italian restaurant earned that Michelin star. Book a table weeks in advance for the small-plate culinary adventure, which includes a curiously craveable chopped salad, fried potato skins topped with stracciatella, egg and caviar, and Boia De's darling dish: cold tagliolini nero with king crab, truffle sauce and herbs. *Little Haiti.*

JOE'S TAKE AWAY

► If you're in Miami from October to May, you need stone crabs. You could get dressed up and wait in an hours-long line for a table at the famous Joe's Stone Crab, or you could wear a t-shirt and shorts and get the same exact food from a walk-up counter right next door. At Joe's Take Away, order the claws and Key lime pie. *South Beach.*

MOTEK

► What began as an unassuming cafe in downtown Miami's diamond district is now the go-to for tasty Israeli fare. The Aventura location has a charming patio with yellow-striped umbrellas and ivy-clad walls, perfect for sipping Israeli chardonnay and noshing on pillowy pitas, mushroom hummus, baba ghanouj, challah bread pudding, and the award-winning Arayes Burger: a pita stuffed with a beef kofta kebab, tahini and harissa aioli. *Downtown Miami and Aventura.*

OLD GREG'S PIZZA

► This pandemic pop-up turned Design District brick-and-mortar serves square pies topped with quality ingredients like maitake and oyster mushrooms, wild ramp salsa verde, and hot honey-drizzled pepperoni. Plus, the dough's been slow-fermented from a sourdough starter. Get there early—they've been known to sell out of pies. *Design District.*

SANGUICH DE MIAMI

► Visiting Miami and not eating a Cuban sandwich is like going to Paris and only eating hot dogs: sacrilege. For $13, get a Cubano so good it's in the Miami Michelin Guide, with City Ham, garlic-marinated lechon, melted Swiss, mustard and homemade pickles layered between two pieces of crunchy Cuban bread. *Little Havana.*

ZITZ SUM

► When a chef who beat Bobby Flay starts selling homemade dumplings out of the back of his car, try them—it may be the start of a buzzy restaurant that will earn James Beard and Michelin Guide nods and a coveted spot on the *New York Times* Restaurant List. Such is the story of Zitz Sum, where Pablo Zitzmann whips up Asian- and Italian-inspired plates like smoked brisket bao buns with guava hoisin sauce and wahoo crudo with lychee and a Meyer lemon "cloud." *Coral Gables. —Jennifer Agress*

GETTING THERE

For all the hassles we hear about flying these days, it's still convenient to get to Florida from Philadelphia International Airport, which has more than 50 departures and 288,000 seats to the Sunshine State daily, according to airport spokesperson Shawn Hawes. ¶ Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, Miami and Tampa are the most-booked destinations, Hawes says, while Jacksonville, Key West, West Palm Beach, Fort Myers and Sarasota are getting up there. Key West is now a daily departure, and Sarasota flights will soon take off 10 times a week, up from twice a week. Jacksonville averages four departures a day. By summer, 11 total FL destinations will be offered from PHL. Daytona Beach starts March 26th, Pensacola joins in April 4th, and Destin-Fort Walton Beach begins April 8th. ¶ On a budget? Frontier has 22 percent more seats to Florida than in 2019, while Spirit has almost 10 percent more. Hate to fly? Just drive to Lorton, Virginia, and board the Amtrak auto-train for a restful overnight rail journey to Miami, where you collect your car and drive off to Florida adventure. *—E.M.*

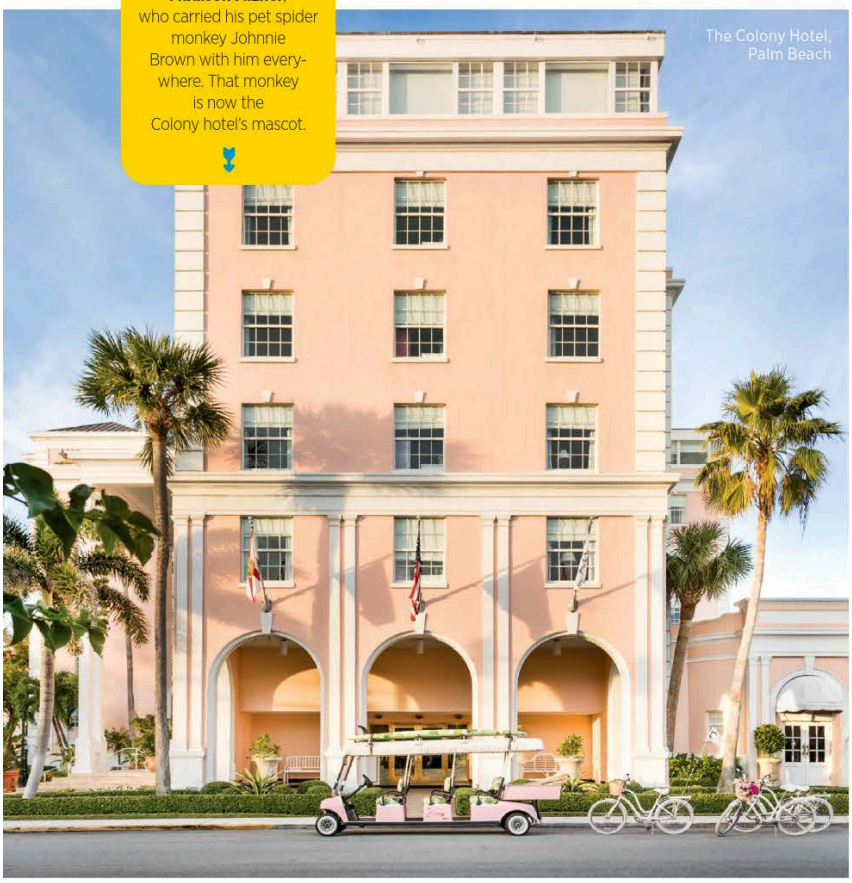
FUJIFILM GIRL

PALM BEACH, OLD AND NEW

There's nothing sleepy about this glitzy, artsy **SOUTH FLORIDA** destination.

When you think of Palm Beach, your mind may go to pastels, country clubs, golf clubs … old money and old people. And while there are still plenty of upscale technicolor vibes to be had, Palm Beach (and next-door West Palm Beach) is fresh and fun, too.

FUN FACT
Palm Beach's Mediterranean Revival style is thanks to architect **Addison Mizner**, who carried his pet spider monkey Johnnie Brown with him everywhere. That monkey is now the Colony hotel's mascot.



The Colony Hotel, Palm Beach

Bottom line: Don't sleep on Palm Beach—unless it's in a private poolside cabana.

For peak old-school Palm Beach glamour, book a stay at the **Breakers** (rooms from $1,190). Dating back to 1896, this beachfront resort has four pools (with private bungalows), on-site golf and tennis, and dining that ranges from the sleek **Seafood Bar** to the speakeasy-like **HMF**. Even if you're not staying here, come for an extravagant Sunday brunch at the **Circle**—you'll be able to scope out the holiday decor while you visit. Equally iconic, the **Colony** (rooms from $539) dates back to the '40s but looks like it was designed for Instagram, with its signature pink exterior and bold prints inside. (No two rooms are alike.) Enjoy happy hour with live music in the **Living Room**, or dine poolside at **Swifty's**. Even if you're not a guest, don't miss a photo op on the signature golf cart.

For a modern twist, stay at the luxurious **Eau Palm Beach** (rooms from $799), especially if one of your main concerns is relaxation—the 42,000-square-foot spa is pure indulgence, with treatments, baths, saunas, and serene relaxation rooms. (If you're not a guest, book a treatment for $100 and up and get a "Fairy Day Pass" to spend all day here. Order a cupcake.)

Head to **Worth Avenue** for high-end shopping like Louis Vuitton, Tiffany's, Chanel and Gucci, plus hometown hero **Lilly Pulitzer**'s flagship, which has the distinction of an on-site design space from which you can order a custom shift. For additional preppy finds, **C. Orrico** is steps away. The **Royal Poinciana Plaza** is like Worth Avenue's eclectic younger sister, with luxe classics (Cartier and Hermès) alongside contemporary picks like Alice + Olivia and Stoney Clover Lane. You'll also find art galleries like **Gavlak**, which focuses on women and LGBTQ artists.

Near Worth Avenue, check out the **Flagler Museum**, the former home of the Standard Oil tycoon, where you can explore Gilded Age gorgeousness—and don't forget to make a reservation for high tea.

For more New School vibrance, head over the bridge to bustling, artistic West Palm Beach. In the **Warehouse District**, discover new artists and dine at the **Grandview Public Market**'s food hall. **Antique Row**—with more than 40 antique and design shops—is also not to be missed.

The **Norton Museum of Art** is a must-do, with more than 8,000 works of art as well as an outdoor sculpture garden. Its Art After Dark events are a great way to experience the museum; you get access to the galleries along with live performances or film screenings.

As the sun sets, head to **Clematis Street** for restaurants and nightlife. Climb upstairs at **Sourbon Kitchen** for some cocktails in the Lab bar, or visit **Clematis Social** to hit the dance floor.

—Laura Swartz

LESLIE URUH



American Beach, Amelia Island

NATURAL BEAUTY

From five-star luxury to B&B charm, North Florida's **AMELIA ISLAND** oozes Southern comfort.

Horseback rides on a quiet beach at sunrise, soft-hued Victorian homes, Spanish-moss-covered tree canopies, year-round temperate weather—to visitors from Philly, Amelia Island is like sliding into a warm bath. A bustling (but not overly crowded) historic downtown, pristine accommodations to suit your style and price range, and friendly (but not intrusive) residents work together to engender this rare state of pure relaxation. The 13-mile barrier island is just a 40-minute drive from the Jacksonville airport, which is just a two-hour-and-20-minute nonstop flight from Philly.

If you know of Amelia Island, it may be for one of two renowned beachfront resorts—the **Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island** (from $599) and the **Omni Amelia Island Resort** (from $359). With its luxurious spa and award-winning restaurant, the Ritz is ideal for pampering girls' getaways or milestone celebrations. For endless adventure packed into one scenic spot, go for the Omni, where staff naturalists lead outdoor activities like salt-marsh kayaking, nature Segway tours, and family education excursions, including Fishing 101 and shark-tooth hunting (complete with a bag for collecting teeth).

For a bed-and-breakfast vibe, check out the **Addison** (from $290), a Victorian-era inn with modern amenities just a few blocks from downtown Fernandina Beach. It's run by Bryn Mawr native Lisa West and her husband, Ron, who prepare baked oatmeal and vegetable quiche with herbs from their garden and offer daily wine hour on the courtyard veranda. If you don't feel like walking, they have bikes for a pleasant cycle to the Main Beach two miles away. When it comes to getting around otherwise, call up **Daniel Transportation**—ebullient driver Rick Crosby might even take you past **Cantina Louie** to spot gators in the pond.

Leave space in your suitcase for gifts from downtown shops like **Color It Green**, **Colie's Clothing + Gifts** and the **Book Loft**, where you'll find plenty of reads from part-time residents John Grisham and David Baldacci. Dining options go far beyond typical beach-town fare. Think octopus, paella and Iberian wines at **España Restaurant & Tapas**; osetra caviar and escargots at **David's Restaurant and Lounge**; crawfish bread and live music at the **Boat House**; and warm butter cake with your cocktails at the **Decantery**. History buffs can grab a beer at Florida's oldest bar, the **Palace Saloon**. Or visit the **American Beach Museum** at American Beach, an ocean-front destination for African Americans in the Jim Crow era, founded by Florida's first Black millionaire, A.L. Lewis. Stop at the **Amelia Island Museum of History**, inside the old county jail, to learn how the town survived under eight different flags of dominion—the only town in America to hold that distinction. —*E.M.*

DEREMER STUDIOS/VISIT AMELIA ISLAND