



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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**FACT SHEET**

**NAME:** Franklin County, FL

**LOCATION:** Franklin County is located along the Gulf of Mexico in Florida's northwest panhandle, 80 miles southwest of Tallahassee, FL and 85 miles southeast of Panama City, FL. The county is bordered by the Gulf of Mexico to the south, and by Liberty, Wakulla and Gulf Counties to the north, east and west, respectively.

**DESCRIPTION:** Franklin County encompasses 545 square miles and is comprised of two municipalities -- Apalachicola and Carrabelle -- along with the communities of Alligator Point, Dog Island, Eastpoint, St. George Island and St. Vincent Island. The county seat is Apalachicola.

More than 87 percent of the county is either state or federally protected land, helping to ensure that Apalachicola Bay, a nursery area for the entire Gulf of Mexico, remains a pristine and productive estuarine system.

With some 200 miles of shoreline, Franklin County is noted for pristine beaches, abundant natural resources for outdoor exploration and fresh seafood. Franklin County harvests more than 90 percent of Florida's oysters and 10 percent of all oysters consumed in the U.S.

**HISTORY:**

Prior to establishment of the Port of Apalachicola in 1822, the county was occupied by Native Americans (primarily near the mouth of the Apalachicola River) for 10,000 years.

Named for Benjamin Franklin, Franklin County was established in 1832.

Shipping cotton was the area's first industry, helping to establish Apalachicola in 1831, and ensuring prosperous growth through the 1850s when Apalachicola became the third-largest port on the Gulf of Mexico. With railroad expansion into Florida, large lumber mills were built to process lumber harvested from the area's vast cypress forests. Lumber magnates built luxurious homes in Apalachicola; many of these homes, in addition to cotton warehouses and other historic buildings, comprise the 200 buildings listed on the National Register in Apalachicola.

Oysters and other seafood including shrimp, fish and crabs also became an important industry in the late 1800s. Today, Franklin County's seafood industry accounts for \$11 million annually, and more than 1,000 people are employed by the oyster industry in Franklin County (representing almost 10 percent of the county's population).

**POPULATION:**

10,264 (US Census Bureau 2006 estimate)

**ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Almost 1,500 accommodations are available in Franklin County, and include houses and condo units primarily rented through vacation rental companies and local rental agencies, ranging in size from small cottages to luxurious, multi-story homes fronting the Gulf of Mexico, Alligator Harbor and Carrabelle River (a deep water port). Many rental homes in Alligator Point, Carrabelle and on St. George Island feature boat docks.

The area also offers historic inns and bed and breakfast accommodations, primarily located in the historic community of Apalachicola, including the 104-year-old

Gibson Inn, a Victorian-era inn listed on the National Register; and the 106-year-old Coombs House Inn.

Local hotels range from modern and luxurious river-front, all-suite properties, including the new Water Street Hotel & Marina in Apalachicola, to affordable hotels and lodges catering to sportsmen.

Carrabelle Beach, and RVC Outdoor Destination, provides RV sites and cottages across from Carrabelle Beach. Campsites are located at Apalachicola National Forest, Tate's Hell State Forest and St. George Island State Park.

**Media note:** Please refer to the accommodations feature for additional, detailed Franklin County lodging information.

## **DINING:**

Franklin County's diverse dining establishments offer visitors everything from casual beachfront restaurants and river-front oyster bars to upscale cafes featuring continental cuisine, coastal specialties, six-course chef's tasting menus and seasonal wine dinners.

Local fare served in more than 30 area restaurants features wholesome and nutritious seafood from the pristine Apalachicola Bay, Alligator Harbor and the Gulf of Mexico, including oysters, clams, shrimp and blue crabs. More than 186 species of fish are found in the Apalachicola Bay estuarine system alone; flounder, redfish, red snapper, mahi-mahi, grouper, cobia, amberjack, Spanish mackerel and wahoo are a sampling of fresh-caught fish frequently found on local menus.

In addition to serving seafood fresh from local markets, many Franklin county chefs also patronize local and regional dairies, beekeepers, produce and livestock farmers to provide the freshest in cheeses, honey, coffee, organic produce and meats for their patrons.

## **FLORA and FAUNA:**

More than 87 percent of this county is either state or federally protected land. Here, you can see the world's largest natural stand of Tupelo trees (producing the only honey safe for diabetics to consume); the world's largest concentration of native pitcher plants; a one-of-a-kind dwarf cypress swamp and no shortage of endangered and threatened species, including the Florida black bear,

jaguarundi, gopher tortoise, red cockaded woodpecker, red wolf, indigo snake, West Indian manatee and more.

Franklin County also is on the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways. In addition to native bird species, birders also can see migratory birds such as least terns, American oystercatchers, plovers, bald eagles, Peregrine falcons, marsh hawks, sharp-shinned hawks, merlins, kestrels, swallow tail kites, night heron, ospreys, indigo buntings and summer tanagers during annual migration and nesting periods.

**ATTRACTIONS:  
Arts and Culture**

Apalachicola Historic District

More than 200 historic homes and buildings, dating from the 1830s, can be seen on the city's walking tour. Included are cotton warehouses, which housed Apalachicola's cotton export during the 1800s, a sponge exchange and Victorian homes of former lumber magnates.

Dixie Theatre (850/653-3456-information line)

Built in 1912, the Dixie Theatre became the entertainment center of the county. Eventually operated as a motion picture theater, the Dixie closed in 1967. Fully renovated in 1998, the Dixie is again hosting live professional theatre, films and live music performances. The 2011 Professional season runs from January through March.

**Parks and Wildlife  
Sanctuaries**

Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve  
(850/670-7700)

Encompassing over 246,000 acres in Apalachicola Bay, this is the second-largest estuarine research reserve system in the nation. A new visitor educational center opened in January 2011 at 108 Island Drive in Eastpoint, with exhibits on the flora and fauna of the area. Open Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Apalachicola National Forest (850/643-2282)

This 564,000 acre-park offers camping, picnicking, boating, hunting and fishing.

Bald Point State Park (850/349-9146)

Wildlife viewing opportunities including birding are abundant at this park, located on Alligator Point where Ochlockonee Bay meets Apalachee Bay. Bald Point State Park offers both land and water activities in a setting that features coastal marshes, pine flatwoods and oak thickets. Facilities include a fishing dock, picnic pavilions and bay beaches for swimming. Open from 8:00 a.m. until sundown 365 days a year. Admission fee required.

Battery Park and the City Marina

Facilities include a boat launch, park with picnic tables and playground. Located at Bay Avenue between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets in Apalachicola.

Cape St. George State Reserve

This nine mile-long reserve is one of three barrier islands that separate Apalachicola Bay from the Gulf of Mexico, and is accessible only by boat. The Reserve's remoteness and wilderness qualities provide an opportunity to explore and enjoy a remnant of Florida's original natural landscape. It also is the former home to the Cape St. George Lighthouse and lighthouse keeper's quarters. Shells are abundant.

Lafayette Park

Offers fishing pier, interpretive signage, a gazebo, picnic tables and playground. Located at Avenue B between 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets in Apalachicola.

Orman House State Park (850/653-1209)

This two-story Greek Revival structure built by Thomas Orman in 1838 is one of the oldest historic homes in Apalachicola. Tours available Thursday-Monday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

St. George Island State Park (850/927-2111)

This park features nine miles of undeveloped beach and a pristine shoreline well-known for abundant shelling and sea turtle nesting. Park amenities include two boat ramps with access to Apalachicola Bay, six well-equipped picnic shelters, restrooms, full-facility campsites and a primitive campsite. A series of trails, boardwalks and observation platforms provide access to the park's bay forest, sandy coves and salt marshes. Kayaks are available for rent. Open from 8:00 a.m. until sundown 365 days a year. Admission fee required.

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge  
(850/653-8808)

This 12,490-acre, undeveloped coastal barrier island is located 22 miles southwest of Apalachicola, and is accessible only by boat. The refuge is a migratory bird stop-over, nesting site for bald eagles and loggerhead sea turtles, and a red wolf propagation site. Public uses include fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, hiking trails, educational displays and photography. The refuge is open during daylight hours; no facilities available. A visitor's center is located on the north end of Market Street in Apalachicola.

Tate's Hell State Forest (850/697-3734)

Encompassing more than 202,000 acres, this wildlife management area's wet prairie, wet flatwoods, strand swamp and bottomland forest environments support an abundance of endangered and threatened species including the Florida black bear, gopher tortoise, red cockaded woodpecker, indigo snake and Jaguarundi. Canoeing, kayaking, boating and fishing are available along the park's 35 miles of rivers, streams and creeks. Public facilities include hiking trails, ATV trails, a concrete boat launch, 34 primitive campsites and a 12-site facility with hot showers and restrooms. Ranger-guided hikes are available for groups.

“Three Soldiers, Detail”

Veterans Memorial Plaza  
230 Market Street

Dedicated July 12, 2008, this park features the only authorized replica of artist Frederick Hart’s “Three Servicemen Statue,” a tribute to Vietnam veterans, which stands at the National Mall in Washington D.C. “Three Soldiers, Detail” is a partial bronze replica created from Harts’ original “Three Servicemen Statue” molds, and rests on a black granite pedestal.

**Museums and Monuments** Apalachicola Maritime Museum (850/653-2500)

Located on Water Street, the Maritime Museum details the maritime history of the Gulf Coast region and river systems that form Florida’s largest river. Museum activities include boat building and restoration and educational programs. Apalachicola Bay sailing excursions are offered aboard the L. Francis Herreschoff designed, 58’ wooden ketch “Heritage.”

Cape St. George Light and St. George Island Visitor Center & Lighthouse Museum (850/927-7744)

[www.seestgeorgeisland.com](http://www.seestgeorgeisland.com)

Built in 1852, this lighthouse stood on Little St. George Island for more than 150 years before collapsing in the surf in October of 2005. Preserved bricks and original pieces of the iron lantern room served as patterns for the lighthouse reconstruction. The reconstructed lighthouse and lighthouse keeper’s home stand at St. George Lighthouse Park in the center of St. George Island. The Visitor Center is open daily (except Thursdays) from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Crooked River Lighthouse & Keeper’s House Museum (850/697-8148)

The lighthouse was built in 1895 to replace the one on Dog Island destroyed in a hurricane in 1873. The fully-restored lighthouse and keeper’s house museum and gift shop are located two miles west of Tillie Miller Bridge in the city of Carrabelle. Visitors may climb the lighthouse from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays; the museum and gift shop is open from noon until 5:00 p.m. Thursday through Sunday.

Camp Gordon Johnston Museum (850/697-8575)

Established in 1942 for the sole purpose of training amphibious soldiers and their support groups, this camp trained a quarter of a million men, closing in June of 1946. Located in Carrabelle, the museum promotes the history of World War II. Guided tours are given on Fridays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.; and on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

Chestnut Street Cemetery

Established in 1831, the cemetery's funerary art reflects the ethnic diversity of the community. Located on Highway 98 between 6th and 8th Streets in Apalachicola.

Fort Gadsden Historic Site (850/643-2282)

Located on the east bank of the Apalachicola River approximately 45 minutes north of Eastpoint, accessed by Highway 65. The site interprets the role of Native and African Americans during the early 1800s. This site is managed as part of the Apalachicola National Forest.

John Gorrie Museum State Park (850/653-9347)

Contains a replica of the ice machine created and patented in 1851 by Dr. John Gorrie in an attempt to cool his yellow fever patients. His invention later became the basis for the ice industry and air conditioning. Exhibits also document the history of Apalachicola. Open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The Raney House Museum

Built in 1836 for cotton commission merchant David Greenway Raney. This museum is listed on the National Register, and is open to the public on Saturdays from 1:00 until 4:00 p.m.

**RECREATION:**

Birding, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, biking and sailing opportunities are abundant throughout the county at parks and wildlife sanctuaries as outlined above. Further information on equipment rentals, as well as area guided tours, is available by contacting guide services listed below.

Franklin County is renowned for both fresh and saltwater fishing opportunities. Local marinas provide deep-water access to the Gulf of Mexico and dozens of experienced local charter fishing guides who will gladly customize their services to fit the needs and special requests of anglers.

Common species caught include: redfish, cobia, pompano, sheepshead, flounder, speckled trout, whiting, Spanish mackerel, black drum, bluefish, striped bass, large mouth bass, tarpon, grouper, snapper, king mackerel, triple tail and amberjack.

**Marinas**

Alligator Point Yacht Basin	(850/349-2511)
Apalachicola Boat Rentals & Wefings Marina	(850/670-8100)
Apalachicola Marina	(850/653-9521)
C Quarters Marina	(850/697-8400)
Carrabelle Boat Club	(850/697-5500)
Carrabelle Marina	(850/697-3351)
Dockside Marina	(850/697-3337)
Fish Camp & Carrabelle River Marine	(850/720-1029)
The Moorings at Carrabelle	(850/697-2800)
Scipio-Creek Marina	(850/653-8030)
Towboat U.S. Carrabelle/St. Marks	(850/697-8909)
Water Street Hotel & Marina	(850/653-3700)

**Eco Tours, Fishing, Kayak and Sailing Charters**

Affordable Fishing	(850/524-5985)
Anthony Stone	(850/528-8868)
Apalachicola Bay Serenity Charters	(850/653-3483)
Backwater Guide Service	(850/653-2820)
Book Me A Charter	(850/653-2622)
Captain Bill Coman Deep Sea Grouper Fishing	(850/349-2414)
Captain Gene Strickland	(850/528-4992)
Captain Gill's River Cruises	(850/370-0075)
Captain Joey Hampton	(850/821-0025)
Captain Mike Locklear	(850/349-8687)
Captain Robin Weichelt	(770/300-6608)
Chasin' Tail Charters	(850/519-1917)
Eco Explorer Cruises, Inc.	(850/653-1666)
Happy Ours Kayak & Canoe Outpost	(850/229-1991)
Jolly Rogers	(850/927-2999)
Journeys of St. George, Inc.	(850/927-3259)
Last Chance Charter Service	(850/251-5571)
Natural World Charters	(850/697-8844)
River to Gulf Adventures, LLC	(850/323-0222)
Robinson Brothers Guide Service	(850/653-8896)
Salty Native Charters	(850/570-6424)
Seahorse Water Safaris, Inc.	(850/227-1099)



**MILEAGE FROM  
SELECTED CITIES:**

Atlanta, GA	351	Memphis, TN	574
Birmingham, AL	334	Miami, FL	561
Chicago, IL	933	Montgomery, AL	244
Columbia, SC	532	Nashville, TN	525
Dallas, TX	884	New Orleans, LA	388
Detroit, MI	1055	Orlando, FL	334
Houston, TX	712	Pensacola, FL	162
Indianapolis, IN	811	St. Louis, MO	831
Jackson, MS	436	Tallahassee, FL	80
Little Rock, AR	707	Tampa, FL	298

**TRANSPORTATION:**

**Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport**  
850/763-6751

Approximately one hour and 30 minutes, by car, from Franklin County; served by Delta Airlines and Southwest Airlines.

This new airport, which opened May 23, 2010, is the nation's first LEED Certified airport terminal.

**Tallahassee Regional Airport (TLH)**

850/891-7800

Approximately one hour and thirty minutes by car to Franklin County; served by Continental Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Northwest AirlinK and US Airways Express.

Car rental agencies include: Alamo, Avis, Dollar Rent A Car, Enterprise, Hertz and National.

Classic Limo and Sedan Service: (850/421-1933)

**Apalachicola Municipal Airport (AAF)**

850/653-8861

Located two miles northwest of downtown Apalachicola; offers three concrete runways in excess of 5,000 feet long and 150 feet wide. FBO services include jet fuel; aircraft cleaning, rental, sales and service; hangar storage; maintenance; pilot lounge; secure ramp; tiedown and weather radar.

**Carrabelle-Thompson Airport (X13)**

850/697-2727

Located three nautical miles west of Carrabelle; offers two concrete runways in excess of 4,000 feet long and 75 feet wide.

**St. George Plantation Owners Airport**

850/927-2362

Located on St. George Island; offers one 3,339-foot, 125-foot wide runway. Airport call sign is F47; runway 14-32. Landing fee of \$20; five tie-downs offered as available at \$10/day. No services or transportation available.

**For Consumer Information, Contact:**

**Franklin County Tourist Development Council**

**[www.anaturalescape.com](http://www.anaturalescape.com)**

**1-866-914-2068 (toll free)**

**1-850/653-8678**

**P.O. Box 819**

**Apalachicola, FL 32329**

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