

Franklin County Florida: Oil-Free Sugar White Beaches Welcome Vacationers

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The Gulf oil spill is an astronomical environmental disaster. Yet there are miles of pristine Florida coast untouched by oil. Some of the most breathtaking and tourist-friendly are the beaches of **Franklin County, Florida**.

You'll find sugar-white sand beaches, plenty of great seafood still rolling in daily, water sports, shopping, and miles of animal preserves and state parks. There are incredibly beautiful rental properties and hotels, and some of the most welcoming folks anywhere. This makes **Franklin County** an ideal vacation spot on Florida's Gulf coast - and it remains free of any residual damage from the oil spill.

St. George Island

Four miles off the Florida coast, accessible by a massive span of bridge from Apalachicola, St. George Island is a pristine strip of land that offers a unique piece of Florida coast. There are 20 miles of beach on the Gulf side and many more miles of marsh, inlets, and oyster bars on the bayside.

St. George Island is part state park, part resort, but you'll find no high rises, no wild night life, no need to set your alarm clocks. Just a laid back beach life awaits visitors on the island. You can camp at the State Park, rent a hotel room, rent a home on the beach, reserve a gorgeous villa -- the experience can be uniquely yours. Check out **Resort Vacation Properties** or **Collins Vacation Rentals** for complete rental information. [[Resort Vacation Properties](#), 140 W. First St, St. George Island, FL, 850-927-2322, www.resortvacationproperties.com; follow on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ResortVacationProperties; [Collins Vacation Rentals, Inc.](#), 60 E. Gulf Beach Drive, St. George Island, FL, 850-927-5425, www.collinsvacationrentals.com]

St. George Island Florida. Photo by Pat Canova

The island offers incredible water sports, fishing, boating, and wildlife experiences. The St. George Island State Park includes nine miles of beaches, of which the eastern-most five miles are accessible only by foot. To experience the outdoors on St. George Island, be sure to visit **Journeys of St. George Island** for kayak rentals, bay fishing trips, off-shore fishing trips, guided boat tours, kayak tours, and kids camps, all offered from their own private dock on the bay. [[Journeys of St. George Island](#), 240 E. 3rd Street, St. George Island, FL, 850-927-3259; www.sgislandjourneys.com]

What's Up in Nearby Apalachicola

Apalachicola, on the mainland, is an historic town, known for its rich past and a still-active seafood industry. It was named one of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Dozen Distinctive Destinations in 2008.

Although you're just minutes from the beaches in St. George Island, you'll find a charming town center, delightful inns, quaint shops, and gourmet food in Apalachicola.

If you're looking for a quiet inn, try [The Gibson Inn](#) or [Coombs House Inn](#). Both historic inns offer rooms filled with luxury, comfort, and history. [The Gibson Inn](#) houses 30 individualized rooms and features the classic restaurant, **Cafe Momi**, open to the public and serving dinner that features the area's freshest seafood. The Gulf seafood paella is an unforgettable specialty featuring tasso, shrimp, fish, and Alligator Point clams. Of course, you'll want to start with a platter of Apalachicola oysters served raw on the half shell. [[The Gibson Inn](#), 51 Avenue C, Apalachicola, FL, 850-653-2191; www.gibsoninn.com]



Historic Gibson Inn, Apalachicola, FL. Photo by Pat Canova

[The Coombs House Inn](#) offers 23 guestrooms and beautiful gardens. Guests can enjoy a full home-cooked breakfast in the elegant dining room, then make use of the complimentary bicycles, beach umbrellas, towels, and beach chairs to enjoy the Franklin County sunshine. [Click here for an article all about The Coombs House Inn](#). [[The Coombs House Inn](#), 80 Sixth Street, Apalachicola, FL, 850-653-9199; www.coombshouseinn.com]

If you prefer a more traditional hotel experience, the [Water Street Hotel & Marina](#) at 329 Water Street offers modern rooms with sleek interiors and all the amenities. The hotel owner also offers unique tours of old town Apalachicola. Check with the hotel for availability. [[Water Street Hotel & Marina](#), 329 Water Street, Apalachicola, FL, 850-653-3700; www.waterstreethotel.com]

Your day in Apalachicola can be spent exploring the town or perhaps you might want to charter a boat and take to the water. Either way, you won't be disappointed. If you opt to explore the town, be sure to check out the [Dixie Theatre](#). Performances are scheduled throughout the summer months in this historic theatre. Check the schedule online at www.dixietheatre.com. [[Dixie Theatre](#), 21 Avenue East, Apalachicola, FL, 850-653-3200; www.dixietheatre.com]

The shopping district in downtown Apalachicola is quaint and colorful. One fun shop is Riverlily, located at 78 Commerce Street (850-653-2600). Riverlily features lovely soaps, toiletries, jewelry, gifts, and more.

Definitely don't miss [The Green Door in Apalachicola](#), found online at www.amytheartist.com. This fun art gallery in a historic, brick-walled building, features the work of artist Amy Friedman and frequently showcases works by guest artists. The gallery is located at the corner of Market Street and Avenue D in the historic Orman Building in downtown Apalachicola at 32 Avenue D. [[The Green Door in Apalachicola](#), 32 Avenue D, Apalachicola, FL, 850-653-1424; www.amytheartist.com]

If you prefer to spend the day on the water, you might want to contact [Book Me A Charter](#) in Apalachicola. They provide inshore and offshore fishing, oystering, and tour guide services. [[Book Me A Charter](#), 850-653-2622; www.bookmeacharter.com]

Check Out Carrabelle

Nearby Carrabelle is not to be forgotten on your trip to Franklin County. The small town is surrounded by nature. In addition to the coast, the massive Tate's Hell State Forest provides major opportunities for exploring the outdoors and



The beaches of Franklin County, Florida. Photo by Pat Canova

experiencing the incredible array of wildlife in Franklin County. There are a number of companies that will arrange experiences for you in the great outdoors. One of those is **Expeditions in Hell**, which offers kayaking, canoeing, fishing, birding, hiking, and other tours. [**Expeditions in Hell**, Carrabelle, 850-274-8603 or 850-697-2434; www.expeditionsinhell.com]

If you want to stay in Carrabelle, be sure to try the **Old Carrabelle Hotel**. There are ten rooms in this 19th century home that's now a quaint inn with a wonderful location in the heart of the town, at 201 Tallahassee Street. [**Old Carrabelle Hotel**, 201 Tallahassee Street, Carrabelle, FL, 850-697-9010; www.oldcarrabellehotel.com]

If you prefer private lodging, such as a home or condo, contact **Sandy Beach Properties** in Carrabelle at 84 Tallahassee Street. [**Sandy Beach Properties**, 84 Tallahassee Street, Carrabelle, FL, 850-697-5300; www.mysandybeach.com]

The beautiful outdoors awaits you in **Franklin County, Florida**. St. George Island's beaches are pristine, untouched by the Gulf oil spill. The seafood is fresh in the restaurants of Apalachicola, untainted by the oil that has stopped the industry in other areas.

Your trip to the beautiful shores of **Franklin County** can be even better with help from these great online resources to keep you up-to-date on the conditions in the Gulf:

<http://anaturalescape.com>
<http://www.resortvacationproperties.com>
<http://www.facebook.com/resortvacationproperties>
<http://www.floridastateparks.org>
<http://www.visitflorida.com>

Getting To Franklin County

Franklin County is located on the Gulf of Mexico in Florida's panhandle, 80 miles southwest of Tallahassee. The county offers more than 200 miles of mostly undeveloped shoreline including four barrier islands (St. George Island is one of those). The coastal communities of Apalachicola and St. George Island are accessible via US Highway 98. You can reach Franklin County by air through airports in Tallahassee and Panama City.

US Airways, **Delta**, **American**, and **United** fly from Phoenix into Tallahassee via several connecting cities. A new airport in Panama City provides excellent service on **Southwest Airlines** from Phoenix, with a change of planes in Nashville. Flights start at about \$500 round trip.