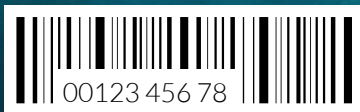


Explore USA

Magazine

Splash into
Summer

Hidden
Gems of the
Southeast



5

Hot Spots
for Camping

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Tampa Bay Nights



Explore **USA**
Magazine





Masthead

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Robert Lynn

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Samantha Bellamy

VP of Sales

Ashley Smith

Account Managers

Jordan Fields, Casey Monroe, Taylor Brooks, Devin Carter

Contributing Writers

Riley Green, Morgan Lake, Avery Rivers

Explore USA Magazine brings you real stories from local places across America. Meet the team behind the travel inspiration



Welcome Letter

Welcome to Explore USA Magazine!
Dear Reader,

We’re excited to welcome you to the Summer 2025 issue of Explore USA Magazine—your seasonal companion for authentic, adventurous, and unforgettable travel across America.

This issue is packed with inspiration for exploring the Southeast, from vibrant cities like New Orleans and Tampa Bay to quiet coastal towns and hidden mountain escapes. Whether you’re into food, history, nature, or family fun, our stories are written with one goal: to help you connect with the real soul of every place you visit.

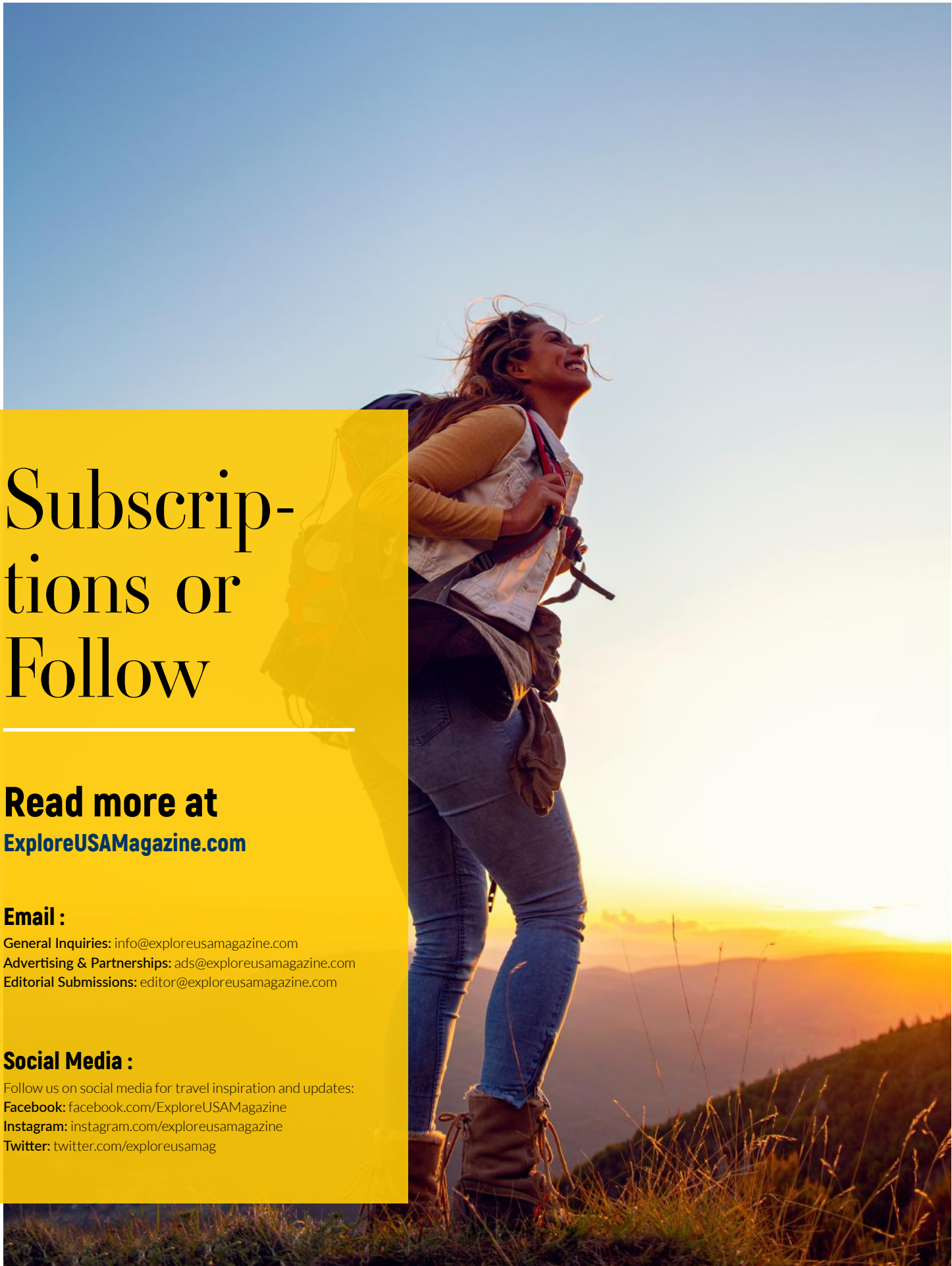
At Explore USA Magazine, we believe travel should feel personal. That’s why we highlight destinations that celebrate community, culture, and character—not just popularity. Through local voices, practical tips, and immersive features, we aim to enrich your journeys with purpose and perspective.

Thank you for joining us on this ride. Share your travels, tag us in your photos, and most of all—enjoy the adventure.

With gratitude,
The Explore USA Magazine Team

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Few holidays bring communities together quite like the Fourth of July. While big cities put on dazzling displays, it's the charm of small-town America where the most heartwarming celebrations unfold. Whether you're enjoying a backyard barbecue, waving a flag at a local parade, or watching homemade fireworks over a nearby lake, the day is about unity, freedom, and tradition.

From Vermont's village greens to Tennessee's rural hills, the essence of Independence Day in the U.S. lies in connection—neighbors greeting each other at farmers' markets, families gathering in folding chairs at the town square, and children chasing sparklers beneath wide-open skies. Many towns host quirky traditions, like outhouse races in Alaska or patriotic pie-eating contests in the Midwest.

One unique way to spend the 4th is by exploring historical reenactments. Cities like Williamsburg, Virginia or St. Augustine, Florida host immersive colonial festivities with actors in period dress, colonial music, and even 18th-century cookouts. These destinations offer both education and entertainment for families looking to connect with America's founding story.

4th of July in America

Authentic 4th of July experiences in small-town America



Looking to avoid the crowds? Plan a 4th of July getaway to lesser-known lake towns, where you'll find laid-back vibes, easy parking, and front-row views of fireworks bursting over still water. It's a more relaxed experience that still delivers all the patriotic flair.

Wherever you celebrate, take a moment to reflect on what freedom means to you—and let your Independence Day unfold under the stars, with laughter, good food, and your favorite people nearby.



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Top 5 Camping Spots
Best family-friendly camping destina-
tions in the Southeast



**Small Town Spotlight #1 –
Abingdon, Virginia**
Things to do in Abingdon VA



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Visit Tampa Bay
Top cultural experiences in
Tampa Bay Florida



Summer Food & Drink Recipes
Easy summer recipes for outdoor
entertaining



Savannah, GA
Historic walking tours in Savannah GA



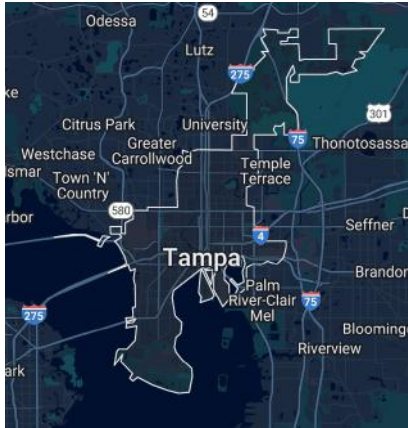
New Orleans, LA
Authentic cultural experiences
in New Orleans

Explore

Tampa Bay

Top cultural experiences in Tampa Bay Florida

Tampa Bay is far more than just a stopover on your Florida itinerary—it's a cultural crossroads bursting with history, flavor, and adventure. This Gulf Coast gem blends old-world charm with new-age energy, making it a top destination for travelers seeking more than just sun and sand.



Historic Roots with a Modern Twist

Start your journey in Ybor City, Tampa's historic Latin district founded by Cuban cigar makers in the late 1800s. Strolling the brick streets feels like stepping into another era—roosters still roam freely and century-old buildings now house vibrant bars, boutiques, and the Ybor City Museum. Don't miss the chance to grab a Cuban sandwich from La Segunda Bakery, an iconic Tampa staple.

Taste the Bay

Tampa's food scene is as diverse as its people. Feast on Cuban, Spanish, Southern, and Caribbean flavors all within a few blocks. Columbia Restaurant, Florida's oldest restaurant, offers traditional Spanish fare and flamenco shows. For something trendier, check out Armature Works—a converted trolley barn filled with food stalls and riverfront views.

Craft beer lovers should explore the "Gulp Coast" trail, featuring dozens of local breweries. Whether you're into hazy IPAs or crisp pilsners, there's a taproom for every taste.

Art, Murals & Museums

Downtown Tampa's Riverwalk offers 2.6 miles of walkable art, parks, and entertainment. Along the way, visit the Tampa Museum of Art or The Florida Aquarium. Local murals, sculptures, and street art create perfect photo ops, all while showcasing the city's creative soul.



Nature & Outdoor Fun

If you're the outdoorsy type, Tampa Bay won't disappoint. Kayak through mangroves in Weedon Island Preserve, rent bikes for a spin across Bayshore Boulevard (the longest continuous sidewalk in the U.S.), or visit the Manatee Viewing Center during cooler months.

For families, ZooTampa at Lowry Park offers interactive animal encounters, while Adventure Island is perfect for a mid-summer cool down with waterslides and lazy rivers.

Local Tips

Avoid the peak midday heat with morning adventures and save your evenings for rooftop bars or sunset cruises. Locals recommend visiting between March and May or October and November for perfect weather without the crowds.

Tampa Bay isn't just a place—it's a vibe. So whether you're coming for the culture, cuisine, or coastline, come ready to slow down and stay awhile.

Summer Food & Drink Recipes

Watermelon Feta Salad with Mint

Ingredients:

- 4 cups watermelon (cubed)
- 1 cup crumbled feta
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
- Balsamic glaze (optional)

Instructions:

Toss the watermelon, feta, and onion gently. Top with mint and drizzle with balsamic glaze. Serve chilled.

Why it works:

This combo of sweet, salty, and herby flavors is a crowd-pleaser—and a visual stunner.

There's something magical about sharing great food and drink outdoors during summer. Whether you're planning a backyard gathering, a beach picnic, or a camping trip, these simple, refreshing recipes will elevate any summer spread.

These recipes are perfect for stress-free entertaining that still feels elevated. Keep ingredients simple, flavors bold, and the drinks ice cold.

Grilled Shrimp Skewers with Citrus Marinade



Ingredients:

- 1 lb large shrimp (peeled and deveined)
- Juice of 2 limes
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1 tsp chili powder
- Salt & pepper

Instructions:

Marinate shrimp for 30 minutes. Skewer and grill 2–3 minutes per side until pink. Serve with fresh lime wedges.

Pro Tip:

Add pineapple chunks or bell peppers between shrimp for extra flair.

Backyard Peach Bourbon Smash

Ingredients:

- 2 oz bourbon
- ½ ripe peach (sliced)
- ½ oz lemon juice
- ½ oz simple syrup
- Mint leaves
- Crushed ice

Instructions:

Muddle peach and mint in a shaker. Add bourbon, lemon juice, and syrup. Shake with ice and strain into a glass over crushed ice. Garnish with a mint sprig.

Pro Tip:

For a zero-proof version, sub bourbon for ginger ale or peach tea.



Savannah, GA

Historic walking tours in Savannah GA

Savannah, Georgia, is a city that whispers its stories through cobblestone streets, moss-draped oaks, and antebellum architecture. It's one of the South's most walkable cities, and the best way to experience its charm is by hitting the pavement.

Begin your visit in Forsyth Park, a 30-acre green oasis surrounded by stately mansions and home to the iconic white fountain. From there, meander north through the city's historic squares—each one a storybook snapshot of 18th- and 19th-century life. Don't miss Chippewa Square, famously featured in *Forrest Gump*, or Monterey Square, lined with some of Savannah's finest homes.

For history buffs, guided walking tours offer deep dives into the city's Civil War past, haunted legends, and architectural evolution. Many tours feature stops at The Mercer-Williams House or The Pirate's House, where folklore and fact blend seamlessly.

Savannah's culinary scene is a flavorful extension of its history. Stop for shrimp and grits or a warm praline from River Street Sweets as you explore the city's riverfront. The blend of Southern hospitality, historical depth, and walkable beauty makes Savannah a must-visit for travelers who love slow, intentional experiences.

Whether you're chasing ghost stories at twilight or admiring garden courtyards at sunrise, Savannah invites you to step back in time—without ever stepping out of your comfort zone.



Authentic

Things to Do in New Orleans

Authentic cultural experiences in New Orleans

New Orleans isn't just a destination—it's a sensory experience. From jazz riffs echoing through the French Quarter to the aroma of gumbo simmering on a street corner, the city pulses with rhythm, history, and soul.



A City Built on Music and Movement

The roots of jazz were planted right here, and live music is the heartbeat of the city. From street performers on Royal Street to historic clubs like Preservation Hall, you'll find tunes that stir your spirit any night of the week.

Tip: Visit Frenchmen Street for a more local, authentic experience beyond the Bourbon Street buzz.



History in Every Corner

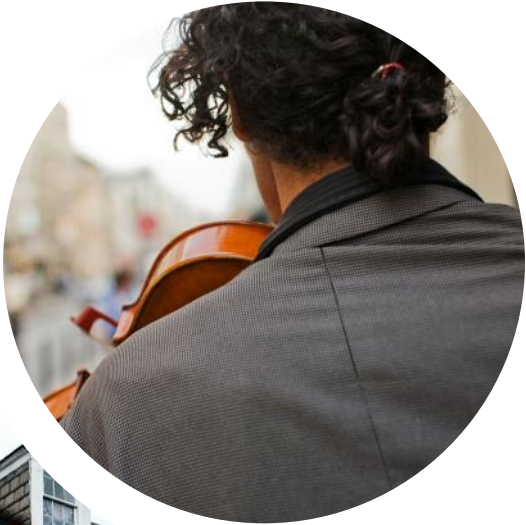
New Orleans offers a mix of cultural influences—French, Spanish, African, and Caribbean—all woven into the city's architecture, food, and traditions. Wander through the Garden District for Victorian mansions and oak-lined streets, or take a walking tour of Treme, one of America's oldest African-American neighborhoods.



Creole & Cajun Cuisine

You haven't truly visited New Orleans until you've eaten like a local. Whether it's a muffuletta from Central Grocery, crawfish étouffée, or late-night beignets at Café du Monde, the city's flavors are bold, complex, and unforgettable.

Want to take it further? Book a local cooking class and learn the difference between a roux and a remoulade.



Festivities Beyond Mardi Gras

While Mardi Gras is the most famous, New Orleans throws festivals year-round. Don't miss French Quarter Fest, Satchmo SummerFest, or Bayou Boogaloo—all celebrations of culture, music, and food that feel less touristy and more neighborhood-rooted.



Local Tips

- Take a cemetery tour to explore above-ground crypts and local legends
- Ride the historic St. Charles Streetcar for just \$1.25
- Visit the New Orleans Museum of Art or the Backstreet Cultural Museum for deep cultural insights

New Orleans is a city that gives back as much as you give it. Come curious, stay open, and leave changed.

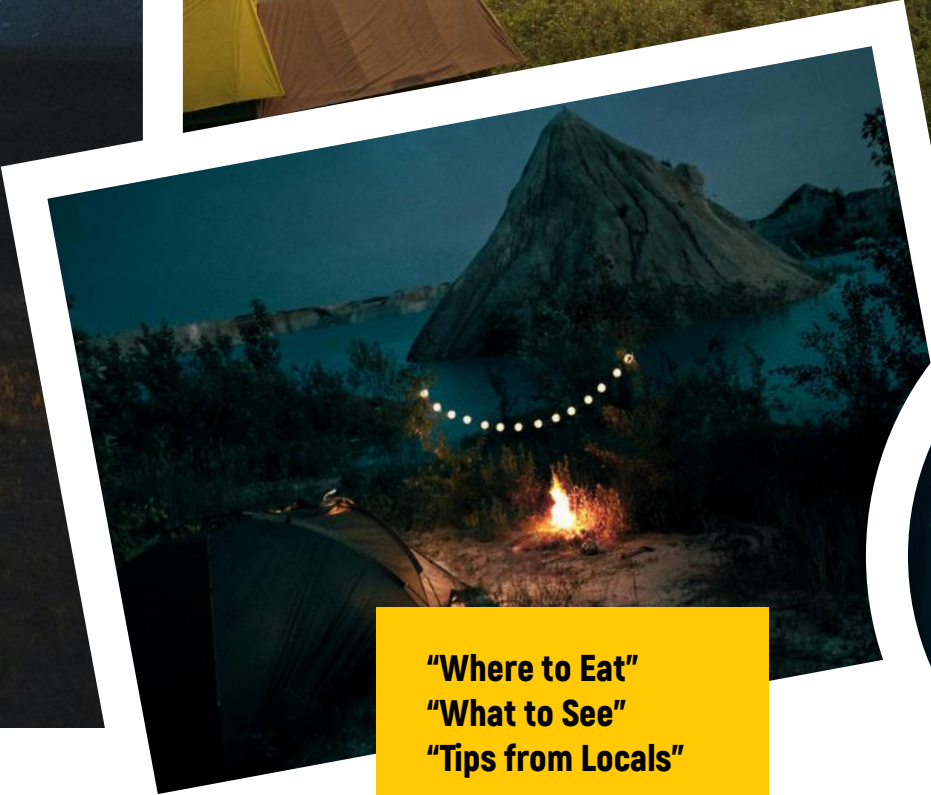
Best Family-Friendly

Best family-friendly
camping destinations in the Southeast

Campgrounds in the Southeast



LOCAL TIP:
Visit Frenchmen Street
after 8PM for live jazz
and fewer tourists.



"Where to Eat"
"What to See"
"Tips from Locals"



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Looking to unplug, connect with nature, and make lasting memories? These top 5 family-friendly camping spots in the Southeast offer scenic beauty, modern amenities, and just the right amount of adventure.

1. Smokemont Campground – Great Smoky Mountains, NC

Tucked inside the nation's most-visited national park, this campground offers hiking, riverside campsites, and nearby waterfalls. It's perfect for families wanting easy access to trails like Chimney Tops or the Oconaluftee River Trail.

2. Skidaway Island State Park – Savannah, GA

Just 20 minutes from downtown Savannah, this hidden gem blends mossy trees, salt marshes, and wildlife sightings. The park offers large campsites, nature trails, and educational exhibits for kids.

3. Lake Guntersville State Park – Alabama

With full hookups, lakeside views, and activities like ziplining and horseback riding, this is a go-to for families. The sunsets over Lake Guntersville are Instagram-worthy and peaceful.

4. Henderson Beach State Park – Destin, FL

Enjoy white sand beaches, dune boardwalks, and clear water while camping just steps away from the Gulf. The facilities are clean, and it's close to Destin attractions while still feeling remote.

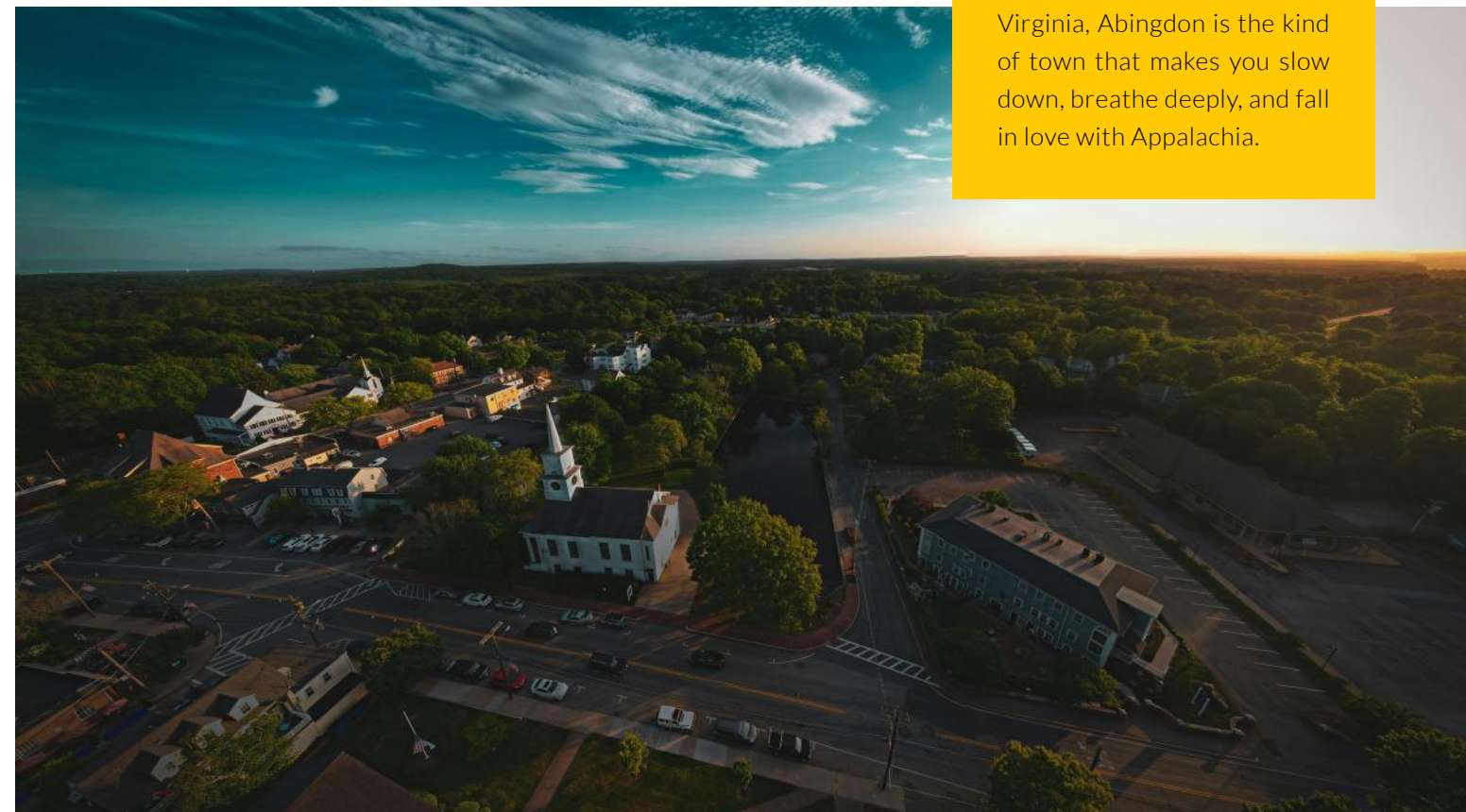
5. Cloudland Canyon State Park – Georgia

This north Georgia park offers epic views, deep canyons, and scenic overlooks. Families can choose from campsites, cabins, or yurts. Don't miss the Waterfalls Trail, especially after a summer rain.

Small Town Spotlight – Abingdon, Virginia

Things to do in Abingdon VA

Tucked into the Blue Ridge foothills of southwest Virginia, Abingdon is the kind of town that makes you slow down, breathe deeply, and fall in love with Appalachia.



Arts & Appalachian Culture

Abingdon is home to the Barter Theatre, the longest-running professional theater in the country. It earned its name during the Great Depression, when patrons traded produce for tickets. Today, it offers a rotating schedule of Broadway-level performances in an intimate setting.

Just around the corner, stroll through downtown Abingdon's art galleries and historic brick buildings, where local artists showcase everything from pottery to Appalachian folk art.



The Virginia Creeper Trail

Outdoor lovers flock to Abingdon for the Virginia Creeper Trail—a 34-mile rails-to-trails path perfect for biking, walking, or running. Rent a bike in town and take a shuttle to Whitetop Station for a scenic, mostly downhill ride through forests, farmlands, and over dozens of trestle bridges.

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Small Town, Big Flavor

Abingdon's food scene punches well above its weight. Grab Southern-inspired brunch at 128 Pecan, sip Virginia wines at The Girl & The Raven, or try the rotating seasonal menu at Sisters American Grill inside the historic Martha Washington Inn.

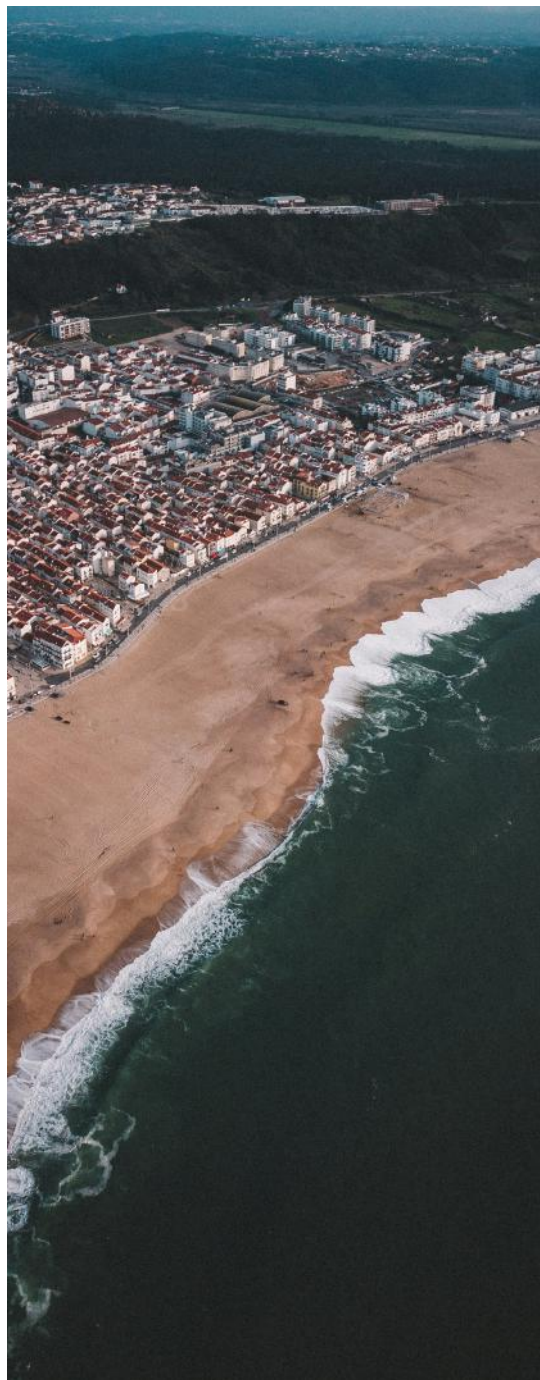


Stay Awhile

The Martha Washington Inn & Spa offers historic lodging with modern comforts. For something quainter, book a room at a locally owned B&B just steps from the main street.

Abingdon is a refreshing mix of heritage, creativity, and hospitality. Whether you come for the arts, the trails, or just a breath of mountain air, this small town will stick with you long after you leave.

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Small Town Spotlight – Apalachicola, Florida

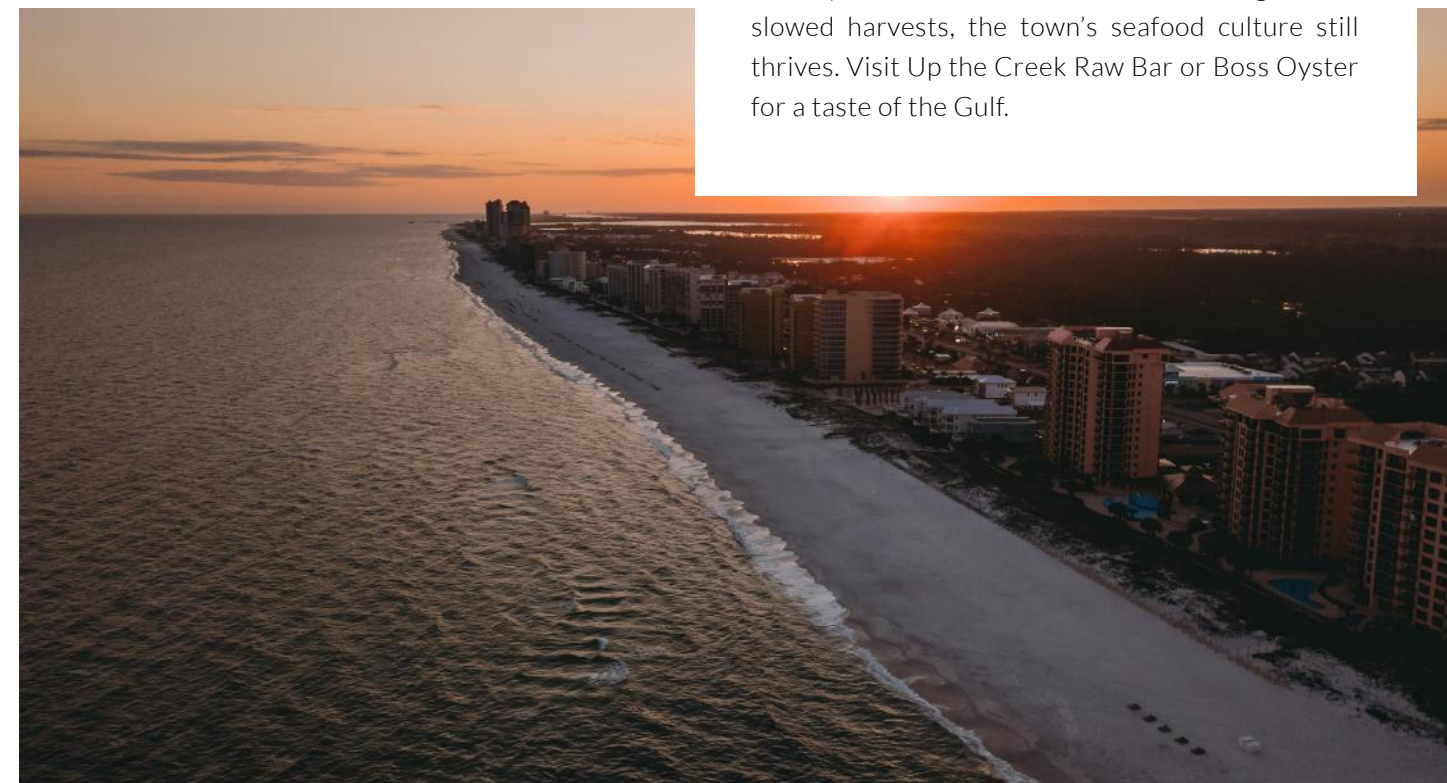
Hidden gem coastal towns in Florida

Skip the crowds of Florida's tourist-heavy beaches and head to Apalachicola, a sleepy Gulf Coast town known for its oysters, maritime charm, and historic soul.



Oyster Capital of the South

Apalachicola has long been celebrated for its world-class oysters, harvested from the Apalachicola Bay estuary. While recent environmental changes have slowed harvests, the town's seafood culture still thrives. Visit Up the Creek Raw Bar or Boss Oyster for a taste of the Gulf.

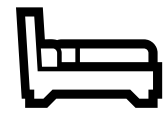


Best
Tour



Walkable Waterfront History

The downtown district is filled with preserved 19th-century buildings, local boutiques, and a welcoming community vibe. Take a self-guided historic walking tour, visit the John Gorrie Museum (honoring the inventor of mechanical refrigeration), and pop into Apalachicola Chocolate Company for a sweet treat.



Stay Local

Choose from cozy inns like the Gibson Inn or one of the many historic homes converted into B&Bs. The charm is in the details—screened porches, rocking chairs, and warm Southern hospitality.

Apalachicola isn't flashy, and that's exactly the point. For travelers seeking peace, authenticity, and a taste of Florida before the high rises, this coastal gem delivers.



Quiet Outdoor Adventures

Nearby St. George Island State Park offers uncrowded beaches, calm waters, and natural dune systems. Rent a kayak or paddleboard for a morning float or take a dolphin-watching cruise out of the town's working waterfront.



Water Adventure Feature —

“10 Best Water Activities in the Southeast”

Best outdoor water activities in the Southeast USA

From lazy rivers to adrenaline-pumping rapids, the Southeastern U.S. is bursting with water-based adventures that are perfect for beating the heat. Here are 10 top picks, whether you're traveling with kids, friends, or flying solo.

1. Tubing the Chattahoochee – Helen, GA

Locals call it "shooting the Hooch." Grab a tube, float past alpine-style architecture, and enjoy the easygoing fun of this mountain-fed river.

2. Paddleboarding in Charleston Harbor – SC

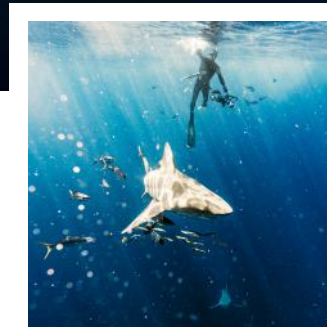
Glide past forts and dolphins while taking in panoramic views of downtown Charleston. Tours are available for sunrise and sunset.

3. Snorkeling at Ichetucknee Springs – FL

This crystal-clear spring near Gainesville offers incredible underwater visibility and tubing routes that feel like floating through a dream.

4. Whitewater Rafting on the Ocoee River – TN/GA

Thrill seekers head to the Class III-IV rapids of the Ocoee, a former Olympic course. Guided trips are available for all skill levels.





8. River Surfing at Rock Island – TN

Yes, you can surf in Tennessee. Catch a standing wave below the dam at Rock Island State Park—a hidden gem for freshwater surf lovers.

9. Canoeing the Suwannee River – FL

Known for its dark, tea-colored water and limestone banks, the Suwannee winds through deep forests and springs with plenty of camping spots.

Whether you're into floating, paddling, sailing, or full-speed thrills, the Southeast has something wet and wonderful for everyone.

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5. Kayaking the Congaree River – Columbia, SC

Paddle past massive cypress trees and wildlife through the heart of Congaree National Park. It's peaceful, flatwater paddling at its finest.

6. Jet Skiing at Norris Lake – TN

Wide open water, hidden coves, and glassy mornings make Norris Lake ideal for jet skiing and wakeboarding.

7. Sailing in the Outer Banks – NC

Catch coastal breezes and explore historic lighthouses with a small-group sailing charter in Ocracoke or Manteo.

10. Waterfall Chasing in Pisgah National Forest – NC

While not exactly a water sport, hiking to waterfalls like Looking Glass Falls and swimming beneath them is an unforgettable summer memory.



Coming This Fall:
Explore USA
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Autumn
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COMING SEPTEMBER 2025

Hidden

Gems of the Southeast

Underrated travel destinations in the Southeast USA



The Southeast is filled with places that don't make the front page of travel blogs—but should. If you're looking to beat the crowds and experience something fresh, these lesser-known destinations offer charm, culture, and scenic beauty without the lines.

1. Bluffton, South Carolina

Just 30 minutes from Hilton Head, Bluffton is an artsy riverfront town filled with colorful cottages, a thriving farmers market, and coastal Lowcountry soul. Don't miss Church of the Cross or the May River oyster shacks.

2. Bardstown, Kentucky

Known as the Bourbon Capital of the World, Bardstown is home to distilleries like Willett and Heaven Hill—but the real surprise is its walkable historic downtown, vintage shops, and authentic Southern hospitality.

3. Eureka Springs, Arkansas

This Victorian village carved into the Ozarks is pure magic. Wind through hairpin turns, explore historic bathhouses, and visit quirky art galleries tucked into forested hillsides.

4. Natchitoches, Louisiana

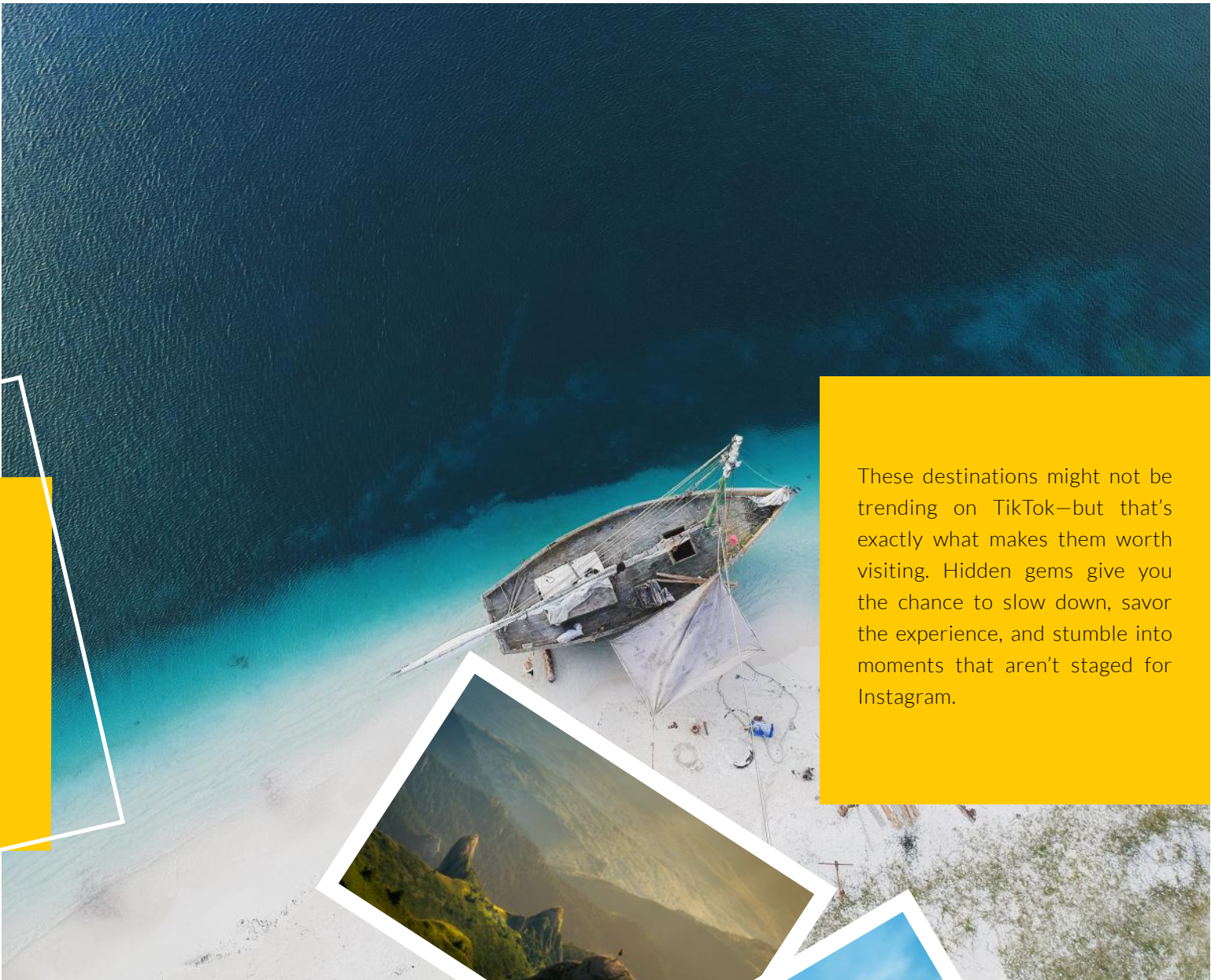
The oldest settlement in the Louisiana Purchase still shines with charm. Famous for its meat pies and brick-paved riverfront, this town feels like stepping into a Southern storybook.

5. Pine Mountain, Georgia

A perfect mix of nature and nostalgia. Visit FDR State Park, tour the Roosevelt Little White House, and walk through the wildflowers of Callaway Gardens.

6. Franklin, Tennessee

Just south of Nashville, this town blends Civil War history with upscale shopping and live music venues. It's a great base for day trips while maintaining small-town vibes.



These destinations might not be trending on TikTok—but that's exactly what makes them worth visiting. Hidden gems give you the chance to slow down, savor the experience, and stumble into moments that aren't staged for Instagram.



Travel Tips

Smart summer travel hacks for families

Planning a summer trip? These practical tips will save your time, money, and sanity—whether you're road-tripping cross-country or flying to a quiet beach town.



1. Pack Smarter, Not Heavier

Use compression cubes to save space and stay organized. Choose moisture-wicking layers and lightweight pieces you can mix and match. Pro tip: roll, don't fold.



2. Start Early (Or Late)

Whether you're driving or flying, avoid peak departure times. Hit the road before 7 AM or after 7 PM to dodge traffic. For air travel, early flights have fewer delays.



3. Bring a Clean Kit

Hand wipes, stain remover pens, and Ziplocs are a traveler's best friend. Especially with kids, you'll want easy solutions for messy moments or snack storage.



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4. Use Google Maps Offline

Download maps of your destination before you lose service. Bonus: save pins of restaurants, gas stations, and rest stops ahead of time.



5. Eat Local, Plan Light

Skip the chains. Ask locals or use apps like Eater or Yelp to find beloved neighborhood eats. Don't overschedule your day—leave space for spontaneous detours or rest.



6. Book State Parks Instead of Resorts

State park lodges and campgrounds often offer the same views and better access to nature at a fraction of the cost. They fill fast, so book early!



7. Curate the Perfect Playlist or Podcast

Keep spirits up with a rotation of road trip playlists, true crime stories, or comedy pods. Audiobooks are also great for long hauls with family.

From coastal getaways to mountain escapes, smart planning = smoother adventures. Just remember: flexibility is your most valuable travel tool.

ABC Travel Adventures By Cindy

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PHONE : (386) 200-4732

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FISH FIXATION CHARTERS

The Fish Fixation Experience

Make the most of your time in Florida and go fishing with Fish Fixation Charters and Captain Danny Riffe! Tarpon Springs, Florida boasts top tier fishing with species like redfish, snook and trout crushing bait year round! We have a plethora of species both trophy worthy and tasty. Whether we are stalking redfish in the flats and mangrove forests, or bottom fishing the reefs for tasty tropical reef fish, Capt. Riffe has you covered. Capt. Riffe wants you to get the full Florida experience and that’s why every rod and reel on the boat is manufactured right here in Florida with the option to use shimano products as well. Every charter Capt. Riffe runs is one of a kind, tailored to the guests’ wants and needs.

How It Works

After booking you will be contacted by Capt Riffe to discuss plans and goals for your trip. Trips with Fish Fixation Charters are kid-friendly, so go ahead and bring the whole family along! The charter boat covers your fishing license, just show up ready for some fishing! Please feel free to contact Capt Danny Riffe anytime for any questions or details about the trip!



About The Captain

Capt Danny Riffe is a seasoned angler that’s been fishing these beautiful waters since 8 years old and got his first tiller boat at only 13 years old. He spent countless hours exploring the intricate waterways and diverse marine ecosystems that make up the Florida nature coast. From casting lines off the piers to navigating the mangrove-lined channels, Capt Danny honed his fishing skills and gained invaluable knowledge of the local fish species and their behaviors. His connection to the water and the natural environment around him shaped his identity and fueled his love for the sport of fishing.

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Charleston, SC



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