

2017 FALL MAGAZINE

# COAST<sub>TO</sub> COAST



## A Wisconsin Getaway The Superlatives of Door County

### FALL RETREATS

Beachwood Resort  
Blaine, Washington

Luna Sands Resort  
Orange City, Florida

Tres Rios RV Resort  
Glen Rose, Texas

## Clear Surf and Squeaking Sand

Exploring Gulf of Mexico  
Beaches from Gulf Shores to  
the Emerald Coast

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DAVE G. HOUSER

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

PUTTING MEMBERS FIRST



## Coast Magazine Fall 2017 Issue

Did you know that Coast to Coast is the only membership campground network that professionally rates our parks and resorts? We have the ability to do this because we are part of the Good Sam/Camping World family of companies. The same teams that inspect and rate over 12,000 campgrounds across North America each year

for the Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide also inspect and rate our membership resorts and Good Neighbor Parks. This represents an extra expense to Coast each year, but we do it so you can be assured of what to expect when you make a reservation at one of our affiliates.

We pay attention to ratings and also feedback from the inspection teams, and have removed parks and resorts from our network because of ratings that fell below our minimum standard. I know you don't like to lose parks from our network, and we don't like it either. But the alternative is to send members to campgrounds where they are likely to have a bad experience. That is obviously something we all want to avoid.

Coast also takes your feedback seriously on the condition of our affiliated campgrounds, and we have also removed parks and resorts from our network based on member feedback. Many times the member ends their email or letter with, "We hope another member never has to have the terrible experience we had." The fact that we all look out for one another is the value of a membership club like Coast to Coast.

Up until now, the only place you could find ratings for our affiliates was in the Coast to Coast Annual Resort Directory. I am pleased to announce that we have

recently adding ratings to our online directory as well. Look for ratings at the top of each affiliate's profile page right under the resort ID and resort type. We hope this can be helpful to you when making reservations through our website.

This is our third digital-only edition of Coast Magazine, and we continue to explore the opportunities provided by this new format. Once again we have expanded our page count to bring you more stories, more photographs, and more information about our network resorts and Good Neighbor Parks. We heard from some of you that you had problems viewing our summer issue using the Flipping Book software. After researching your comments we discovered that our Flipping Book software version utilized some older flash technology that is no longer supported by some browsers. As a result we upgraded our Flipping Book software for this fall issue. We believe this will correct any issues, but please let us know if you experience any problems with this issue by sending an email to [CCRPresident@CoastResorts.com](mailto:CCRPresident@CoastResorts.com). And keep in mind that we also provide a PDF of each issue which you can read as an alternative to the Flipping Book.

Our next issue will be the 2018 Coast to Coast Annual Resort Directory issue, published in January 2018. As always this will be a print issue and contain complete listings of all resorts and Good Neighbor Parks as well as explanation of your membership benefits, all to help you successfully navigate the Coast to Coast system. Our annual directory issue will also include complete state and provincial maps showing locations for all our resorts and Good Neighbor Parks, as well as profiles of 20 of our favorite Coast resorts. Look for that in your mailbox in January.

I sincerely hope this has been a great year for you and that you have been able to create loads of great new travel memories using your Coast to Coast membership.

Happy Travels!

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## MEMBER MATTERS

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR COAST TO COAST MEMBERSHIP

### New Good Neighbor Park in Crystal River, Florida

Located in charming **Crystal River on Florida's Gulf Coast, Rock Crusher Canyon RV Resort** by Sun RV Resorts is our newest Coast Good Neighbor Park (GNP). Don't let the name deter you. The resort is located near an old rock quarry, which is now the site of an outdoor pavilion and amphitheater. Rock Crusher Canyon offers a fun and relaxing atmosphere on 80 acres with great amenities and a fantastic location for outdoor enthusiasts on Florida's Nature Coast. This new GNP is available at a special discounted rate for Coast to Coast members.

Rock Crusher Canyon's resort amenities include security gatehouse, outdoor screened-in swimming pool, shuffleboard, horseshoes, playground, dog run, and an inviting clubhouse.

Near the Gulf Coast, Crystal River is surrounded by a number of state parks and nature preserves and is well known for being a prime location for viewing manatees in the wild. The historic downtown area offers quaint shops, restaurants, and night life with live entertainment just blocks from the waterfront and it's only 70 miles from Tampa. To learn more, visit [CoastResorts.com/directory](http://CoastResorts.com/directory).

### Arrowhead Lakes Resort

#### Three Men and a Resort

Venture Out Resorts may be the newest management group in the industry with possibly the youngest owners. These three young men in their late 20s have a great background in how to succeed because each works with the Outdoor Adventures team. Venture Out's owners Jason King, Ryan McCauley, and Adam Webber are lifelong friends who bring youth, cutting-edge business techniques, and knowledge of the newest technology to Venture Out Resorts' first resort: Arrowhead Lakes Resort in Wapakoneta, Ohio.

"We're making big investments in technology to make sure we can provide the best customer service possible," says McCauley. "Striving toward online reservations and trying to improve multiple processes."

But they're not only relying on technology, they've also physically improved much of the resort.

"The resort has a beautiful indoor pool facility and bath house that were faded," he said. "We've repainted all the buildings and roofs, replaced an 8,000-foot pool deck, and just finished a new storage lot on the backside of the property. We added a beautiful 18-hole miniature golf course that was designed and built by Harris Miniature Golf of New Jersey."

The men are also in process of adding a number of sites around one of the lakes, which will become prime RV



sites. By the way, there are three lakes at the resort all stocked with fish and ready for anglers of all ages. The lakes also provide opportunities for water sports. A visit to the resort's website will enumerate the many other amenities: [ventureoutresorts.com/arrowhead-lakes/](http://ventureoutresorts.com/arrowhead-lakes/).

Maybe one of the smartest business decisions made by the three was to retain many of the people on the previous management team, headed by Park Manager Jamie Hendrickson.

Of course, a prime location is always a bonus and the town of Wapakoneta adds its own special charm. In addition to a delightful historic downtown, famous son Neil Armstrong called the town home. Not only did he walk the streets, but was the first person to walk on the moon in 1969. There are several places named after Armstrong and a tour of the Neil Armstrong Air and Space Museum is a must-see.

"We're shopping for our second resort now," says McCauley. "We envision having five additional properties ... or more."

## Unicoi Springs Camp Resort

### Quarter million-dollar facelift

Unicoi Springs Camp Resort in Helen, Georgia has been "A Tradition in Camping Since 1983". It was turned over to the owners association in 1991 and is now governed by a 7-member board of directors with the owners taking a hands-on approach. Those owner-operators have finished

many updates throughout the years, but recently they've outdone themselves by completing a \$250,000 facelift to this already beautiful resort. Owners were recently invited to a Grand Opening to show off the renovated resort.

"Over the past couple of years, we have completely dismantled and rebuilt our miniature golf course and our playground," says Christine Hubal, marketing. "The playground now includes a pavilion and picnic tables and beautiful new and modern equipment including items for children with special needs."

Additional improvements include a refurbished tennis court with an added pickle-ball court. Instead of just one court, the resort now has a separate volleyball sand court. As soon as you approach the resort, you'll notice the improvements on the front entrance with a new design and new plants that will continue to mature and fill in.

Unicoi Springs Camp Resort is now open year round. During the colder months, some areas will be closed off to focus on additional upgrades and repairs during a slower time. Owners enjoy sewer, water, electric, cable and high speed wi-fi at every site at no additional cost.

"We are currently surveying our owners in an effort to gain insight as to additional amenities they would like to see here at the resort," says Hubal. "Our desire is to remain the premier RV resort in our area and the country by continually rebuilding and modernizing our facilities to meet the needs of today's RV camping consumer and his family."



# RESORT UPDATES

## ADDITIONS AND CHANGES TO THE 2017 DIRECTORY

The 2017 *Coast to Coast Resort Directory* is packed with everything you need to navigate the network of Coast to Coast Resorts and Coast Good Neighbor Parks. To keep members up-to-date, each issue of Coast magazine includes any updates that have occurred since the last issue.

### COAST PREMIER

#### CALIFORNIA

**Delta Shores Resort & Marina**, Isleton (page 122); from Deluxe to Premier resort

### COAST DELUXE

#### ARKANSAS

**Golden Pond**, Shirley (page 119); from Classic to Deluxe resort

#### CALIFORNIA

**Canyon Creek Resort**, Winters (page 126); from Premier to Deluxe resort

#### MICHIGAN

**Heartland Woods Family Resort**, Stockbridge (page 142); formerly Heartland Woods Family RV

#### WASHINGTON

**O'Sullivan Sportsman Resort**, Othello (page 190)  
Email: [osullivan@sosmail.us](mailto:osullivan@sosmail.us)

### DELUXE TERMINATIONS

#### MICHIGAN

**Timberlake Resort & RV Club**, Mears (page 140)

#### WISCONSIN

**Harbour Village Resort**, Sturgeon Bay (page 194)

### GOOD NEIGHBOR PARKS

#### NORTH DAKOTA

**Roughrider RV Resort**, Minot (page 218); Directions:

From Jct of Hwy 83 & Hwy 2/Hwy 52: Go 4 mi W on Hwy 2/Hwy 52, then 0.5 mi N on paved CR 17 (54th St). Resort on R.

#### WASHINGTON

**River Oaks RV Resort**, Oroville (page 221); formerly River Oaks RV Park & Resort

### GOOD NEIGHBOR NEW

#### FLORIDA

**Rock Crusher Canyon RV Resort - Sun RV Resorts**, 237 S Rock Crusher Rd, Crystal River, FL 34429. Resort phone (248) 234-6027, reservation phone (248) 234-6027, URL: [sunrvresorts.com](http://sunrvresorts.com). Directions: From Jct US 19 & SR 44: E 3.4 mi on SR 44 to Rock Crusher Rd, S 1.6 mi, Resort on L. From Jct I-75 & SR 44 (ex 329): W 22 mi to CR 490, SW 3.5 mi to Rock Crusher Rd, N 2.1 mi, Resort on R. Latitude: 28.85579, Longitude: -82.53685, check-in: 2 p.m., check-out: noon, 50 amp, max RV length 35 feet.

RV Notations: Special discount rate for Coast members. Site includes back-in sites with limestone base, many trees throughout park. No tents or pop-ups. Van conversions accepted. Self-contained units only. Drive-ups not accepted. Amenities: bathhouses, laundry, library, picnic area, hot tub, heated outdoor pool, horseshoes, group activities, picnic table all sites.

#### NOVA SCOTIA

**Adventures East Campground and Cottages**, Baddeck (page 194); from Classic to Good Neighbor Park

### GOOD NEIGHBOR PARK TERMINATION

#### FLORIDA

**Riverside RV Resort & Campground**, Arcadia (page 205)

#### NEW MEXICO

**Kiva RV Park & Horse Motel**, Bernardo (page 217)

#### ONTERIO

**Trout Water Family Camping, Ltd.**, Sunderland (page 222)



**RESORT TYPE**  
Coast Classic

**LOCATION**  
Blaine, Washington

**SEASON**  
Year-round

**WEBSITE**  
[SoundPacificRV.com/  
Beachwood-Resort](http://SoundPacificRV.com/Beachwood-Resort)

# Beachwood Resort

The resort is bounded by the Pacific Ocean and the Canada-U.S. Border

Drive north as far as you can on U.S. Interstate 5 and you'll find yourself in Blaine, Washington, home of Beachwood Resort. The city has several monikers. These include "Where America Begins," "The Gateway to the Pacific Northwest," and the "Peace Arch City." All these phrases are commentaries on Blaine's unique locale. In addition to being on the U.S./Canadian border, it's next to Drayton Harbor and Boundary Bay.

Of course the location is very important for the success of an RV resort, but it's also essential to have the right parent company. In this case, Sound Pacific Resorts skillfully manages this RVer-friendly Washington resort as well as two more resorts in Oregon.

Once you turn your rig into the 80 acres of all-season recreational fun, you know you've chosen well. With 24-hour security, hundreds of full hook-up sites, and clubhouses that are aimed at both adults and teens, your fun is just beginning.

Amenities include a general store, Wi-Fi, exercise room,

and laundry room. Meet old and new friends while enjoying one of three heated swimming pools and hot tubs. Take on all comers on the lighted tennis and basketball courts or try a game of horseshoes. Activities include potlucks, sports, breakfasts, and much more. The activities office is open year-round.

If you're traveling without your rig, one of the 34 park model rental units should be perfect for you.

The coastal climate of the area provides fairly mild weather compared to the rest of the Pacific Northwest. Blaine enjoys more sunny days and a milder climate than neighboring communities.

If you decide to explore off-site, drive to the Peace Arch Historical State Park. The 67-foot arch was constructed to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the treaties that were a result of the War of 1812 with Great Britain. The park is known for its lush gardens, vast lawns, and panoramic views of Point Roberts and Vancouver Island.



## RESORT PROFILES





**RESORT TYPE**  
Good Neighbor Park

**LOCATION**  
Orange City, Florida

**SEASON**  
Year-round

**WEBSITE**  
[travelresorts.com/resorts](http://travelresorts.com/resorts)

## Luna Sands Resort

After a day of Florida sun, relax in this shaded campground

Location, location, location. It's never more important than when choosing a resort and it's true when pulling your rig into Luna Sands Resort in Orange City, Florida. It's conveniently located minutes away from Blue Spring State Park and St. John's River for fishing and boating. The area also offers golf, flea markets, and beautiful beaches. Fan of car racing? Daytona International Speedway, New Smyrna Speedway, and Volusia County Speedway are all just 30 minutes away. Orlando, with all of its world-famous attractions, is just an hour down the interstate.

Blue Spring State Park is a designated manatee refuge and the winter home to a growing population of West Indian manatees. During manatee season, which runs approximately from mid-November through March, manatee can be viewed from atop the spring's overlooks. During this time, the spring is closed to all water activity, including swimming and diving.

But during other seasons, the spring's crystal clear

73-degree water can be enjoyed by swimmers, snorkelers, and certified scuba divers. Fishing, canoeing, and boating are also enjoyed along the river.

But once set up on your beautiful site at Luna Sands Resort, there's no need to go off-site. The resort accommodates all size RVs while maintaining the natural beauty of Florida and all its wildlife that surrounds the property. This relaxing, shady spot offers you a wonderful break from a day of fun in the Florida sun with mature oaks, native palms, and tall pines. Stroll down to the pond and keep an eye out for the storks, ibis, cranes, hawks, eagles, and hummingbirds that all call the resort home.

Amenities include a convenience store, showers, laundry, and 30- and 50-amp hookups. The pet-friendly resort has a spacious dog park for your four-legged friends. Take advantage of the playground, basketball and volleyball courts, outdoor pool, and game corner with pool table and TV.



### RESORT PROFILES



**RESORT TYPE**  
Coast Premier

**LOCATION**  
Glen Rose, Texas

**SEASON**  
Year-round

**WEBSITE**  
tresriosrvpark.com

# Tres Rios RV Resort

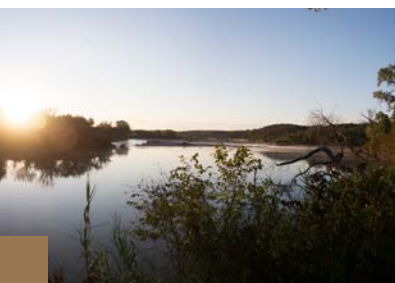
Perfect Texas weather and a trio of rivers make this a destination resort

When choosing a destination, RVers look for a variety of options. Weather is always a consideration. If the RVer is active, then the number of nearby activities is important. And, if the RVer is an angler, a canoer, a boater, or just enjoys water activities, then nearby water is a must. This makes Tres Rios RV Park in Glen Rose, Texas, the place to be.

Once onsite, choose from spacious RV sites nestled among native Texas pecan and oak trees on 47 spacious acres. The friendly and helpful staff are ready to help, including planning activities which include cards, bingo, stitching, potluck dinners, wood crafts, nature walks, and more. Major events include the chili cookoff and antique car show, auctions from the American Cancer society, and concerts. There are spacious meeting rooms perfect for family reunions, as well as regular activities including jam sessions, kayak demonstrations, and community clean-ups of the surrounding rivers. It's a great place to meet old and new friends.

But we haven't even touched on the water part of the resort. Tres Rios is named for the three Texas rivers that converge on the resort's southern point—the Brazos River, Paluxy River, and Squaw Creek. The Brazos is popular for tubing, kayaking, and canoeing. The Paluxy is known for numerous dinosaur footprints found in its bed near Glen Rose. The three rivers assure visitors of water fun year-round. Not only are the waters great for fishing—the Brazos River is home to 44 fish species—but the area is a magnet for a large number of bird species including blue herons and bald eagles. Warblers, cranes, plovers, peregrine falcons, woodpeckers, and sandpipers are present throughout the year.

Off site, take a day trip to nearby Dinosaur Valley State Park in Glen Rose. Long ago, dinosaurs left footprints in the mud at the edge of an ancient ocean. Today, you can walk in their tracks in the bed of the Paluxy River.





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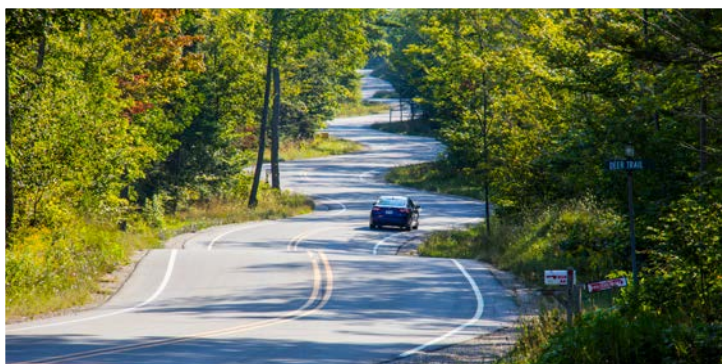
# A WISCONSIN GETAWAY

The Superlatives of Door County





*Etched with caves and overhangs from years of scouring from ice and crashing waves, limestone ledges rise 20-40 feet above Lake Michigan in Cave Point County Park.*



## Welcome to Door County

Story and photos by Dave G. Houser

For most of us, the Midwest doesn't exactly pop to mind when planning a vacation. No soaring mountains. No towering redwoods. No steaming geysers or snowy glaciers. No ocean or palm-lined beaches. Agreed, much of the American heartland is flat, land-locked and best suited to farming—but it does offer a few surprises.

Wisconsin's Door County is one of them. A narrow 70-mile-long finger of land jutting northward between Lake Michigan and Green Bay, the Door Peninsula is a popular getaway destination for residents of Midwest metro areas such as Milwaukee, Chicago, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Indianapolis. But if you live elsewhere, listen up. You have no idea what you're missing.

Door County is a region rich in superlatives. It has more miles of coastline (298), more lighthouses (11), and more state parks (5) than any county in the United States.

While these factoids may seem a bit dry, here's a juicier tidbit: the Door region is one of the leading fruit producers in the nation. Tart, succulent Montmorency cherries and crunchy Ida-Red apples are grown in nearly 100 orchards, and from spring to fall you'll find them everywhere—in pick-it-yourself orchards, at roadside stands, in jams, preserves and salsas, in wines and beers, and especially in those temptingly delicious pies served at eateries throughout the county.

A friend and I paid a well-timed visit to Door County last September—just after the mass exodus of summer visitors—where we were blessed with sunny skies, near perfect temperatures, and delightfully uncrowded conditions. So please join us for a recap of our three-day driving tour, taking in key points of interest along both the lakeside and bayside of the slender peninsula.

Our tour got underway in Sturgeon Bay, Door's largest community with a population of about 9,800, situated near the bottom of the peninsula. We didn't stop here, but as we crossed the State Route 42/57 bridge, we spotted several large freighters passing through a canal below. Sturgeon Bay boasts the Great Lakes' largest shipyard and the city is home to the Door County Maritime Museum, an institution that anyone with nautical interests might want to include on their itinerary.



**Area of Detail**

**WISCONSIN**

**BAY**

**GREEN**

**LAKE MICHIGAN**

**DOOR COUNTY**



Map by William Tipton



Photographing Cave Point County Park.



While its Swedish pancakes are highly acclaimed, it's the goats who munch grass atop its roof that made Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant popular.

The peninsula's seemingly pedestrian name has nautical roots, conferred by French explorers who met their match trying to navigate the devilish waters snarling around its northern tip back in the 1600s. Those who survived the shipwrecks named the passage *Porte des Morts*, or Door of the Dead—and the Door part stuck.

Our drive north along Green Bay on SR 42 led us through Egg Harbor, a charming little hamlet of 280 residents that legend says gained its name from an egg fight between groups of wealthy vacationers. The town sits on a bluff above a deep, well-protected harbor that makes it a favorite anchorage of summer sailors.

Our destination for the day was Fish Creek, another small town about 15 minutes north, where we'd reserved a campsite for our rental RV at Peninsula State Park. Fish Creek becomes Door Country's social and cultural hub each summer with a busy schedule of music and theater events. Students from Birch Creek Music Performance Center stage concerts here and the Peninsula Players, America's oldest professional summer resident theater, present plays six nights a week from mid-June to mid-October.

We ordered a take-out pizza at Wild Tomato Wood-Fired Pizza and Grille, opposite the park entrance,

before heading in to secure our site. On the way in, we encountered one of the park's most outstanding features, the lush 18-hole Peninsula Golf Course, often cited as one of the most scenic courses in the state.

Peninsula State Park is Wisconsin's third largest state park, sprawling over 3,776 acres and is immensely popular, attracting nearly a million visitors a year. The park's five campgrounds offer nearly 500 sites.

Open year-round, the park is laced with hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing trails. During the summer months, kayaks and canoes are available for rent at Nicolet Beach, where there's also a nice stretch of sand for swimming and sunbathing.

Towering limestone bluffs, some as high as 150 feet, rise from the shore of Green Bay and provide panoramic views from stone-lined overlooks constructed in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Another key attraction is Eagle Bluff Lighthouse. President Andrew Johnson authorized construction of this handsome light in 1866, and it was completed in 1868. The lighthouse is open to visitors, and there's a small museum in the former lighthouse-keeper's home.



Hardy Gallery in Ephraim



1868 Eagle Bluff Lighthouse



Wilson's Restaurant in Ephraim



Ephraim's first firehouse

The following morning, we explored the park for a couple of hours and then set out north again to see some more of the peninsula. Arriving in Ephraim (pronounced EE-from), a picture-perfect whitewashed Moravian settlement dating to 1853 that tumbles down a hill to a harbor bobbing with sail boats, we could clearly see why Door County is so often compared to New England's Cape Cod.

We walked through Harborside Park along the town's gracefully curved waterfront and continued on to the pier where Anderson's Barn, an old graffiti-adorned warehouse, serves as home to the Hardy Gallery featuring exhibits by local artists.

With the noon hour approaching, our thoughts turned to lunch, and in Ephraim there's no better choice of eateries than Wilson's Restaurant and Ice Cream Parlor. A Door County institution since 1906, Wilson's, with its red-and-white-striped awnings, old-fashioned soda fountain, and booths with Wurlitzer juke boxes, is a throwback to an earlier era. We ordered patty melts and home-brewed root beer, topped off with an obligatory slab of cherry pie. It was like a trip back in time.

If you have kids in tow, they'll undoubtedly holler out for a stop at Ephraim's 1930s Firehouse. A Deco-style

stone structure harboring a pair of vintage fire trucks, it was restored in 2009 and now serves as a museum.

SR 42 continues north to the tip of the peninsula, and like most visitors, we couldn't resist a visit to the "top of the thumb," as locals call it. Our mission got derailed, however, just a few miles up the road in Sister Bay.

We had to pay a visit to Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant, where the town's most famous residents—a family of goats—can be seen grazing on Al's sod-covered roof. Inside, dirndl-clad waitresses serve Swedish pancakes topped with lingonberries and drowning in whipped cream.

We were in orchard country now and that mandated yet another stop—at Seaquist Orchards Farm Market—where we browsed a veritable cornucopia of Door-grown produce and farm products such as jams and jellies, juices, ciders, and baked goods. We left with some cherry preserves and a bottle of oh-so-tasty apple butter.

Our next stop was Gills Rock, a hard-working New England-style fishing port at the edge of the peninsula, where we checked out the docks lined with nets and other fishing gear and then dropped by Bea's Ho-Made Products. We watched Bea Landin and her crew brewing up a vat of cherry-apple jam as we nibbled on cherry





*Cherry orchards carpet the landscape near Sister Bay.*



*Ida-Red apples at Seaquest Orchards, Sister Bay.*



*A fish boil is a traditional dining experience found only in Door County.*



*Freshly caught Lake Michigan whitefish is the prime ingredient of a traditional Door County fish boil prepared at the Old Post Office Restaurant, Ephraim.*

oatmeal cookies fresh from the oven.

SR 42 winds to an end in nearby Northport, where we came upon a lineup of cars and RVs boarding a ferry to Washington Island. We didn't have time for the half-hour trip (across the infamous Death's Door Passage), needing to hustle back to Ephraim for a 7 p.m. dinner reservation, but we spoke with a couple who had just returned. She said she enjoyed shopping at the various craft studios, while he said it was a great place—if you liked watching paint dry. Sound familiar? RV campers should make note that Washington Island Campground offers 45 sites, most with water and electricity.

For visitors seeking further offshore adventure, there's a passenger-only ferry that continues on to tiny Rock Island, a forested state park that's laced with hiking trails and is home to Pottawatomie Lighthouse. Built in 1836, it was the first light to serve Wisconsin's shoreline.

Back in Ephraim, we were more than ready to sample Door County's most unique and legendary dining tradition—a fish boil—at the Old Post Office Restaurant. Assembled with fellow diners in a courtyard behind the restaurant, we watched as the resident "boil master" stoked a bonfire beneath a large cauldron filled with saltwater and chunks of Lake Michigan whitefish, potatoes, and onions. As

the cooking process neared completion, he doused the fire with kerosene, creating quite a conflagration.

As the oohs and aahs subsided, we were led inside where a team of servers presented steaming platters of tasty whitefish, butter-drenched potatoes, and salads. A spectacle nowadays aimed at tourists, fish boils originated in the 19th century as a quick and economical means of feeding Scandinavian lumberjacks being deployed to clear land for farming.

Well fed and thoroughly rested following our second and final night at Peninsula State Park, we set out to explore the Lake Michigan side of the peninsula. This necessitated a short drive north once again on SR 42 to Sister Bay to connect with SR 57, a well-maintained two-laner that traces the lakeside shore south to Sturgeon Bay.

Our return to Sister Bay was timed just right for a Swedish pancake breakfast at Al Johnson's—and permission to climb atop the roof for some photos of Al's goats.

Just a few miles south of Sister Bay on SR 57 we reached Baileys Harbor where, following some cryptic directions provided by the Door County Visitor Bureau, we set out on winding County Road Q that eventually led us to our first objective of the morning, Cana Island Lighthouse.



*Cana Island Lighthouse, overlooking Lake Michigan and built in 1869, is one of 11 lighthouses dotting the shore of Door County.*



*The 1868 Eagle Bluff Lighthouse has been immaculately restored and preserved in Peninsula State Park.*

Not the easiest place to reach, the light is situated on a small 8.7-acre islet accessed by walking a narrow wave-lapped gravel causeway.

It's well worth getting your feet wet to see this handsome, old 1869 light, now maintained by the county and a local preservation society as a maritime museum. It's open to the public, seven days a week (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.) from April 30 to October 30. A modest entry fee includes access to the keeper's house and the opportunity to climb Cana's 102-step circular staircase for panoramic views over Lake Michigan.

Continuing south to Cave Point County Park, it became apparent to us that lakeside is definitely the wild side of the Door Peninsula. Here, a short hike leads to a dramatic scene as waves crash against jagged limestone ledges, etched with caves and overhangs, rising 20-40 feet above Lake Michigan. It was mesmerizing to watch as big rollers pounded into the rock with a resonant boom and hiss.

Whitefish Dunes State Park, our last stop before making the final leg of our journey back to Sturgeon Bay, joins Cave Point to the south. Most visitors come here to enjoy the park's beckoning 1.5-mile stretch of sandy beach, but the preserve also is notable for its namesake



*Whitefish Dunes State Park is home to nearly two miles of beautiful sand beach and some of the tallest sand dunes in the Midwest.*

dunes—the largest in Wisconsin. We hiked a boardwalk to the top of Old Baldy, the park's highest dune at 93 feet.

It was a warm Indian summer afternoon and, reluctant to leave, we unlaced our booties and shuffled barefoot along the beach, lamenting that we hadn't planned a longer stay. So, don't make the same mistake. Give Door County at least a week. You'll love every minute of it.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Door County Visitor Bureau: [doorcounty.com](http://doorcounty.com) • 800-527-3529



# CLEAR *Surf* AND SQUEAKING *Sand*

Exploring Gulf of Mexico Beaches from  
Gulf Shores to the Emerald Coast



*Homes perch at the edge of the sand along Alabama's coast where inhabitants enjoy the sun, sand, and the sea.*



*Fudpucker's Beachside Bar and Grill is noted for its free alligator exhibit.*

## Exploring The Emerald Coast

Story and photos by Richard Varr

I found the perfect sand dunes—sparsely grassed, wind-rippled pure white mounds gently rolling along the beach—without a single footprint. I'm standing along a secluded beachfront on Alabama's Fort Morgan peninsula—so perfect it seems that I dare not take another step. But when I do, I can hear the sand squeaking beneath my feet.

What? Squeaking sand? Yes, in fact this stretch of Gulf of Mexico beaches—from the blue-green waters of Gulf Shores to Florida's brilliant green-tinted Pensacola, Destin, and Panama City Beach coastlines—is all about the sand. It has one of the purest white beachfronts anywhere in the world, and there's a geological explanation.

Made of tiny quartz particles, the fine-powder sand flushed down through rivers and streams from the Appalachian Mountains to the Gulf during the last Ice

Age, nearly 20,000 years ago. Through the millennia, the crystals that have formed the protective dunes and sandy shores have been ground down to fine particles by the surf and storms.

"At least one side of every grain of sand is flat. So, when you walk on it, those flat sides slide against each other causing the sound," explains Kathy Marler Blue, executive director of the Destin History and Fishing Museum, an attraction along Florida's so-called Emerald Coast. "When you're walking on the sand here, you're actually walking on very ancient Appalachian Mountains."

I'm now on a journey skirting these pristine shores and their surrounding bustling communities that draw visitors year-round. I begin along Alabama's 32 miles of beachfront stretching from the Florida state line to the sun-scorched brick walls and earthen ramparts of historic Fort Morgan on the barrier island's edge.

Wait a minute. Alabama has beaches? Who knew.

"In some ways, we're still a best-kept secret because the vast majority of the country has no idea that we're here," says Kay Maghan with Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism. "But for others, we're the favorite place they've been coming to for the last 10 or 20 years, some being second- and third-plus generation visitors from



Orange Beach is one of Alabama's coastal jewels.



People aren't the only visitors to the beach. Great blue heron can also be seen to patrol the shore.

the same family.”

Nestled between the high-rise condos of Gulf Shores and the commercial centers of Orange Beach lies one of Alabama’s coastal jewels—undeveloped Gulf State Park with its 1,540-foot-long fishing pier, the Gulf of Mexico’s second longest. Hiking and biking paths crisscross within the park, home to RV campgrounds and lakes.

Despite the relatively short coastline, Alabama has the largest offshore reef system in the country with artificial reef structures—concrete triangles, ships and cars—sunk to bolster fishing and diving habitats. Thus, it’s no surprise that the area’s mostly homegrown restaurants and eateries serve up seafood caught daily—grouper, triggerfish, cobia, mackerel, amberjack, and red snapper, to name a few. “Red snapper was discovered here in the 1800s and for years Orange Beach was known as the red snapper capital of the world,” says local fisherman and boat captain Randy Boggs, owner of REEL Surprise Charters.

Local seafood specialties include sweet coconut shrimp and the unique, so-called Royal Red shrimp. “They come from deep depths of 2,000 to 4,000 feet and if they’re cooked right, you don’t have to do a lot of work to get

them out of the shell,” says Chris Steele of Gulf Shore’s family owned De Soto’s Seafood Kitchen. “If you’re used to lobster or snow crab, I think they’re up there with that quality and texture of seafood.”

For a look back to Civil War history, I take State Route 180 west for more than 20 miles to reach Fort Morgan, passing pastel-colored beach houses and the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, a great place for hiking and birding. Completed in the 1830s, Fort Morgan was the last Confederate stronghold on the Gulf of Mexico. It’s along the shores of where the 1864 Battle of Mobile Bay took place. This is where Union Admiral David Farragut supposedly shouted his famous command, “Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead,” when he ordered his fleet through a line of Confederate-planted underwater mines.

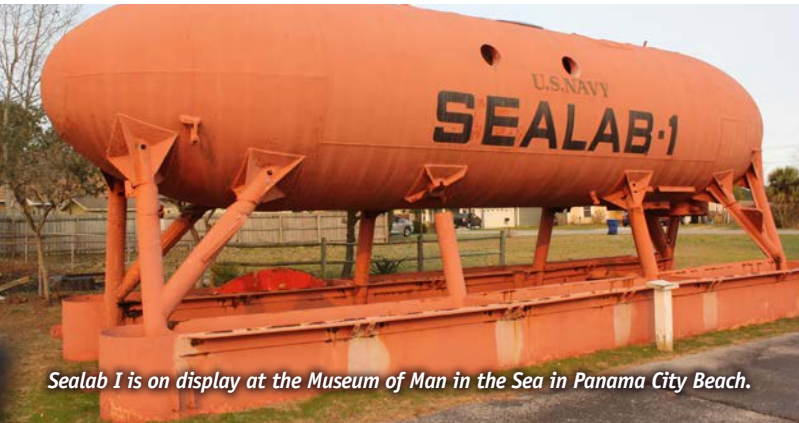
By evening, I’m back in Orange Beach where I see sleek blue herons with their stick-like legs gingerly walking on the modern marina’s docks of The Wharf commercial district, located along the Intracoastal Waterway. It’s where décor shops sell such sea-themed objects as pelicans carved from driftwood, mermaid figurines, and an oyster shell chandelier. A nightly light and music show illuminates a row of central palm trees with dancing colored lights as visitors ride one of the South’s largest Ferris wheels.



*The National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola.*



*Yellow-streaked Blue Angels' jets hang from the ceiling at The National Naval Aviation Museum.*



*Sealab I is on display at the Museum of Man in the Sea in Panama City Beach.*



*Underground tunnels to Fort Barrancas, Pensacola.*

Leaving Alabama, I cross the Florida state line at Perdido Key on State Road 292 East to 173 South, the Blue Angel Parkway, until my must-see first stop—the National Naval Aviation Museum at the Naval Air Station Pensacola. The base is the home of the Blue Angels, the Navy’s Flight Demonstration Squadron with its shiny blue jets that fly in precise formation often at national events and celebrations.

With free admission, the museum is the world’s largest naval aviation museum with more than 150 restored aircraft—World War I and II planes, and more recent jet fighters like F-14 Tomcat featured in the movie *Top Gun* and the F-4 Phantom II, to name a few. What catches my eye is Marine One, the olive-green helicopter serving presidents Nixon and Ford, and the one from which Nixon waved a final goodbye after resigning the presidency in 1974. Yellow-streaked Blue Angels’ jets hang from the ceiling, and visitors can also squeeze inside Blue Angels’ jet cockpits and ride flight simulators.

A great place to view Blue Angels’ practice sessions is from atop the nearby 1859 Pensacola Lighthouse and Museum, the Gulf Coast’s oldest lighthouse. “They fly by; sometimes they wave and do a wing-wiggle,” says Jeff Reve, the museum’s outreach coordinator. From the lighthouse, the expansive views include Pensacola

Bay and shoreline, and Civil War-era forts Barrancas and Pickens, which remain today.

Only a five-minute drive, Fort Barrancas, with its elongated brick walls, dates back to the 18th century. Cannons once fired from the white-walled semicircular battery facing the Gulf of Mexico. Confederates troops first occupied the fort during the Civil War, abandoning it in 1862 after battles with Union forces.

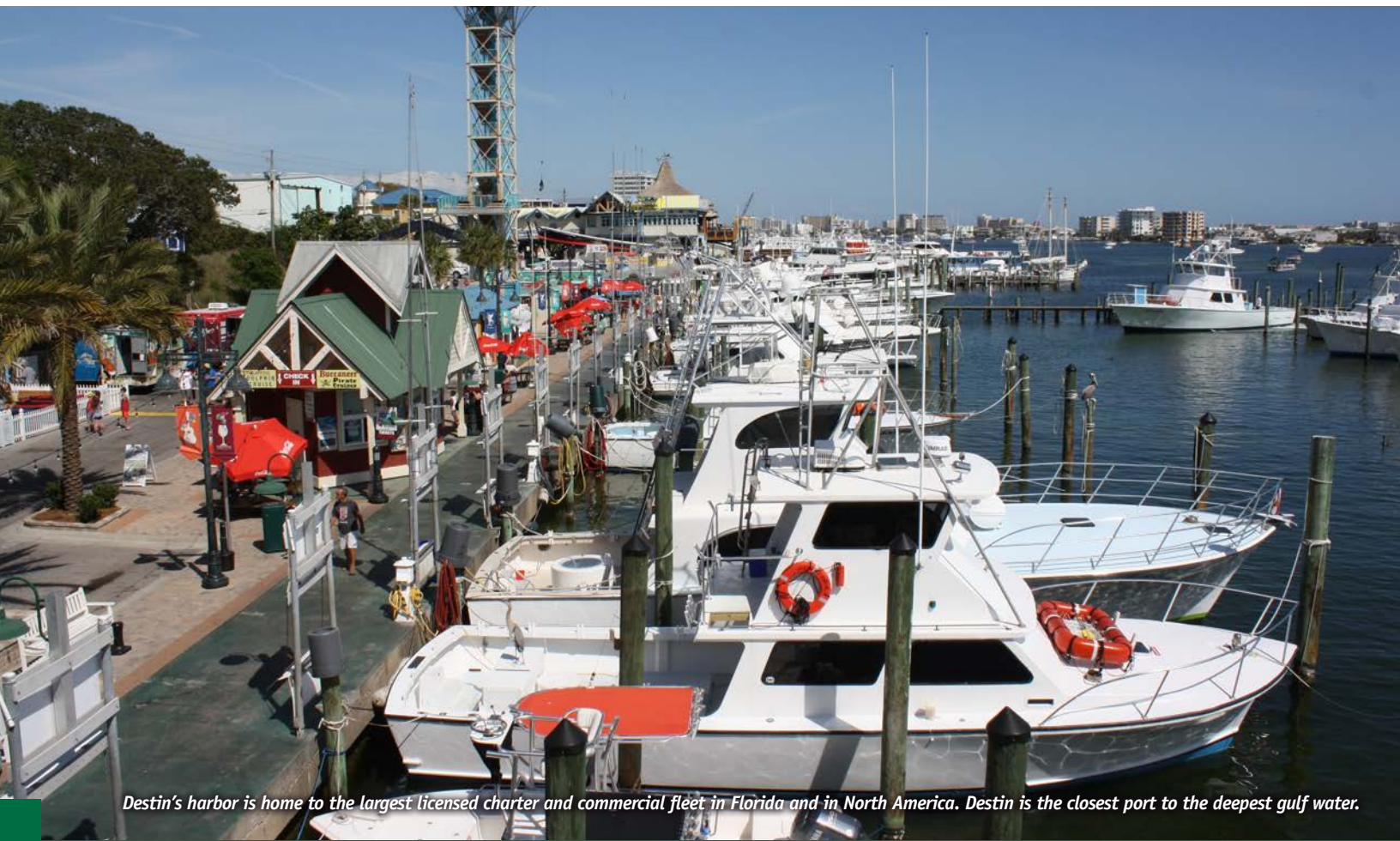
“The ironic thing is that the forts were built as our first line of homeland security on our coastline to protect the United States,” notes Park Ranger Sandy Tennyson. “As it turns out, the only time the forts were ever used was during the Civil War when we were fighting each other.”

I continue east along State Road 292, passing through downtown Pensacola before merging onto U.S. Highway 98 and crossing the three-mile-long Pensacola Bay Bridge. I opt not to take a toll bridge to the Pensacola Beaches on the barrier island and Fort Pickens, where Geronimo and other Apache prisoners were once held, and instead stay on Hwy. 98 to Fort Walton Beach on Okaloosa Island, home to its 1,262-foot-long fishing pier and a beachside boardwalk lined with restaurants.

The region’s early history is showcased at The City of Fort Walton Beach Heritage Park and Cultural center,



*Shore birds and boats share the same space. Here a great blue heron stands guard.*



*Destin's harbor is home to the largest licensed charter and commercial fleet in Florida and in North America. Destin is the closest port to the deepest gulf water.*





*Destin's multi-story condo and hotel buildings tower over bustling HarborWalk Village and Marina.*

alongside the Indian Temple Mound Museum with an actual 19-foot-high earthen mound built by pre-Columbian tribes living in the area from 700-1500 AD. Also onsite is the century-old Fort Walton School House with original desks.

Upon crossing the Marler Bridge from Okaloosa Island, I can't help but notice Destin's multi-story condo and hotel buildings towering over bustling HarborWalk Village and Marina with its pulsing restaurants and bars. But within this modern complex, a centerpiece carved magnolia tree helps define Destin's past. The tree was thought to be 170 years old when it died in 2014, when a local artist carved its snaking limbs into figurines including dolphins, fish, turtles, swordfish and a blonde-haired, green-tailed mermaid. A nearby placard reads that city founder Captain Leonard Destin is believed to have tied his boats to the tree during storms in the mid 19th century.

Tour operators moor their boats in the marina, ready to depart on daily excursions. The harbor and surrounding waterways are filled with snorkelers, kayakers, and those on dolphin cruises, parasailing adventures, and wave runners. The harbor is also home to the largest licensed charter and commercial fishing fleet in Florida and in North America. "Destin is the closest port to the

deepest water," says Kathy Marler Blue, explaining how the depths drop from 600 feet at 40 miles out in the Gulf to 2,700 feet deep at 70 miles. Destin holds its Fishing Rodeo for the entire 31 days of October.

There's also good reason marketing slogans call the miles of beaches here the "Emerald Coast. "The sand here is 97-98 percent quartz and its main properties include its ability to reflect," explains Marler Blue. "When the sunlight goes through the water and reflects off the quartz, it refracts through the bodies of the micro-organisms, thus casting the color."

Because I wanted to see alligators (this is Florida), I stop in Destin's Fudpucker's Beachside Bar and Grill noted for its free alligator exhibit. More than 100 gators up to six feet long swim and sun themselves, cramming a central restaurant pond beneath viewing platforms. "If you're from up north, you probably haven't seen too many alligators in your life," says alligator handler Chris Bastian, noting that visitors can feed the gators and hold a small one while posing for a photo.

When reaching Panama City Beach, my first stop is St. Andrews State Park. Sandwiched between a lagoon and the Gulf, visitors can dive, kayak, and canoe. Boats are the only way to reach pristine Shell Island—a



View dozens of bottles of sand from around the world at the Destin Chamber—proving that the region’s sand is the whitest.



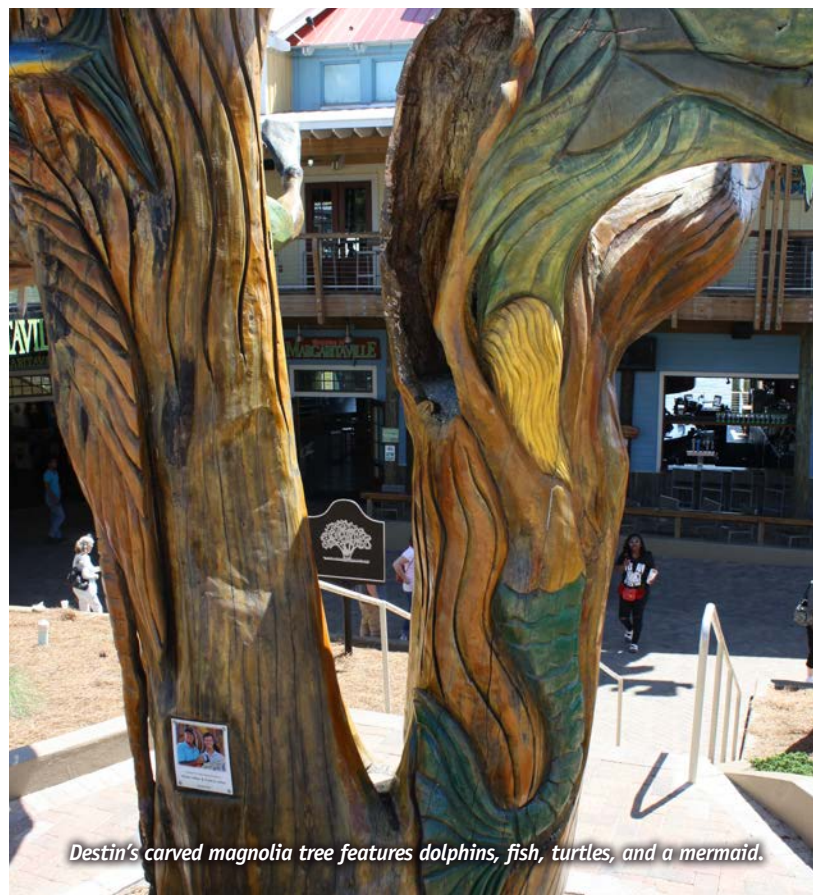
The Lighthouse and Museum is a great place to watch the Blue Angels practice.

barrier island just east of the park and a great place for snorkeling.

An interesting and maybe overlooked attraction is the Man in the Sea Museum with deep-sea diving gear, transportation modules, and the original SeaLab I hull from the 1960s’ U.S. Navy program. Mounted outside the museum, the red submarine-like tube was the world’s first underwater living facility—an 11-day experiment submerged nearly 200 feet. Other nearby attractions include the GulfQuest National Maritime Museum exploring Gulf of Mexico maritime science and history, and the *USS Alabama*, both in Mobile.

A final stop at the Destin Chamber convinces me that the region’s sand is perhaps the whitest on Earth. On display are several dozen bottles with sand from all over the world—brown sand from Prince Edward Islands, Chile’s salt and pepper sand, ivory brown from Belize and Saudi Arabia’s pink-tinted granules, for example.

“Year after year people bring sand from all over the world,” says Vice President of Communications Elizabeth Spies. “And all that helps illustrate how white Destin’s sand really is.”



Destin’s carved magnolia tree features dolphins, fish, turtles, and a mermaid.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

[gulfofshores.com](http://gulfofshores.com) • [emeraldcoastfl.com](http://emeraldcoastfl.com) • [visitpanamacitybeach.com](http://visitpanamacitybeach.com)



# HISTORIC FRONT ROYAL

Photo by L. Michael Whited



*Views of the Shenandoah Valley from an overlook on the Skyline Drive.  
Photo by L. Michael Whited*



*Wineries have found the Front Royal climate and soil perfect for growing grapes.*

## **Northern Virginia's Hub for Adventure** Story by Dee Whited

Small town Front Royal, population 14,000, didn't start out to be the gateway to adventure, but that's what it's become. Incorporated in 1788, the early pioneers chose to settle in an area that's bounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Massanutten Mountains, and the Shenandoah River. By using Front Royal as your home base, branch out in any direction to explore natural wonders and historic venues: hiking, backpacking, birdwatching, canoeing, kayaking, spelunking, camping, photography, winetasting, hot air ballooning, and touring by automobile or motorcycle.

But ... before embarking on one of the many spokes to adventure, see the sights in downtown Front Royal. Begin on Old Town Main Street. From the Village Commons' gazebo, follow the sidewalk beside giant hanging containers spilling over with colorful flowers. On either side of the street peruse the unique antique shops or relax at one of the many eateries and bakeries.

Quite a few of the buildings were built in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Or, take a right at the gazebo. Chester Street is a dream come true for lovers of historic homes. Front Royal is a national historic district, encompassing approximately 470 contributing buildings and structures.

Main Street's Warren County Courthouse is an imposing stone-faced edifice—the second built on this site. The first was constructed in 1836. On the lawn are monuments honoring soldiers who fought in World Wars I and II, Korea, and Vietnam. To the right is the Confederate Monument, built to honor Warren County's Confederate soldiers. In 1862, the town became embroiled in the Civil War when Confederate Army Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's army forced the withdrawal of a large Union army. For a free printed map / brochure of the Battle of Front Royal driving tour, stop at the town visitor center in the Train Station on Main Street. The railroad was destroyed in the Civil War and restored in the 1870s. The Train Station was built sometime before 1885.

By now you're itching to lace up your boots and start exploring. Follow Royal Avenue south to the entrance to the Shenandoah National Park. The park encompasses part of the Blue Ridge Mountains and is flanked by the broad Shenandoah River and the Shenandoah Valley.



*This sign welcomes visitors to the Shenandoah National Park and subsequent Skyline Drive.  
Photo by L. Michael Whited*



*A hot air balloon follows the course of the Shenandoah River.*

The scenic roadway, Skyline Drive, takes you through the 105-mile-long Shenandoah National Park, providing more than 75 overlooks with spectacular vistas. Five hundred miles of trails, including 101 miles of the Appalachian Trail, lead visitors to waterfalls, panoramic views, and protected wilderness. Click this link to get printable maps for hiking in the Shenandoah National Park: [www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/mapshiking.htm](http://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/mapshiking.htm). From hiking to camping, white-water rafting to mountain climbing, the opportunities to surround yourself with nature are infinite.

The Appalachian Trail is a 2,181-mile public footpath that traverses some of America's most scenic, wooded, pastoral, wild, and culturally resonant lands. The trail traces the ridge of the Blue Ridge mountains, often following the same route as Skyline Drive. The trail crosses Skyline Drive numerous times in the park.

Just south of the entrance to Shenandoah National Park is the entrance to the Shenandoah River State Park. In addition to more than five miles of meandering river frontage, the park offers scenic views of Massanutten Mountain to the west and Shenandoah National Park to the east. Pack a picnic lunch and stay a while or make reservations to spend the night at the campground or in one of the cabins. With more than 24 miles of trails and

a new zipline, the park has plenty of options for hiking, biking, horseback riding, and adventure.

Also known as the Canoe Capital of Virginia, Front Royal has outfitters that rent canoes, kayaks, rafts, and tubes to explore the Shenandoah River. Rates include shuttle service along routes ranging from three miles to 40-mile overnights.

If you prefer a stroll underground, Skyline Caverns offers a tour of one of the area's unique "karst" or cave systems, featuring the world's largest encrustation of anthodites, "orchids of the mineral kingdom." These cling to the cave ceiling, their delicate white spikes resembling crystalline sea urchins.

No matter when you plan to visit Front Royal and environs, you'll find beauty and adventure. Experience the loveliness through all four well-defined seasons, each with its own unique features. Mid-winter temperatures average 35 degrees. Spring temperatures average in the 60s, as they do in the fall. Summer temperatures average 76 degrees, providing the perfect climate for the many outdoor activities typical of the area. The lack of foliage in the winter months offers spectacular views not visible any other time of the year. A variety of buds and blossoms can be enjoyed in the spring. The



*The gazebo is the gathering place in Historic Front Royal. Photo by L. Michael Whited*



*The 2,000-plus mile Appalachian Trail passes through the Shenandoah National Park adjacent to Front Royal.*



*Once a year, the Warren County Fair hosts 4H members who show off the livestock they've been raising.*



*Chester Street is dotted with historic homes. This one houses the Virginia Beer Museum. Photo by L. Michael Whited*

spectacular foliage in the fall provides colors unmatched anywhere.

Let your taste buds have an adventure at one of Front Royal's vineyards. High elevation, an eastern exposure, well-drained rocky soils, nearly frost-free conditions, and cooler summer days and nights all add up to grapes that can hang in the vineyard until optimal ripeness is achieved. The result? Well, come taste for yourself. Or tour the first official beer museum in Virginia on Chester Street. The Virginia Beer Museum tells the story of the state's 400-year history with beer. You may also taste some of Virginia's award-winning craft beers.

You may want to explore wineries further through the Blue Ridge Whiskey Wine Loop. This compact wine-tasting route offers seven wineries and a whiskey distillery to explore, along with gorgeous natural scenery tracing the northern part of Shenandoah National Park. For more information visit [www.discovershenandoah.com/whisky-wine-loop/](http://www.discovershenandoah.com/whisky-wine-loop/).

If you prefer a birds-eye view, Blue Ridge Hot Air Balloons offers a one-hour aerial tour, followed by the traditional champagne toast upon landing.

A stop by the Warren County Fair in August will get you close to your roots. Cheer on the young people who've

worked tirelessly raising farm animals to be judged and sold. There's also plenty of music, motorsport events, pulling contests, animal events, and a Monster truck event. It's your chance to taste fresh-picked roasted corn-on-the-cob, crispy funnel cakes, hot dogs, French fries, popcorn, and many more fried delicacies.

Because Washington, D.C., is just an hour east, plan a day or two exploring the nation's capital. Drive your vehicle into the city or find the closest Metro station and don't worry about city parking. In addition to touring iconic museums and public buildings, you can continue to experience nature by hiking on the Capital Crescent Trail, horseback riding at the Rock Creek Park Horse Center, rent a Tidal Basin paddle boat for a new view of the monuments, or see the sights via bicycle or even Segway with Bike and Roll.

Visit Front Royal, the hub for adventure, and explore one or more of the exciting spokes radiating from this historic Northern Virginia town. You won't regret it.



# UNDERSTANDING TRUCKS

## Drive Safely with Big Trucks

By Howard J. Elmer

During RVing season many RVers will find themselves in heavy truck traffic on our highways—a situation they find frightening. When asked what it is about large trucks they dislike, the most common answer is “they just scare me.”

If you'd prefer to be comfortable around trucks, rather than nervous, then take this cure. A dose of information with a chaser of common sense.

First, consider that as RVers we share a similar set of road manners with trucks. We both have a large vehicle with considerable weight that we have to move as smoothly, efficiently, and safely as possible. Now consider that a large tractor trailer can weigh (loaded) upwards of 100,000 pounds. But, rather than taking this as a frightening figure, let's change this fact to an image. Think of a calm elephant, slowly lumbering about

its business. An elephant, which can be frightening because of its size, certainly doesn't come across that way because of its movements. It walks slowly, steadily with a measured easy gait. In fact, in all the National Geographic film footage I've seen, most of an elephant's movements are almost predictable. A tractor trailer behaves much the same way. That driver is trained to make planned, slow movements. He will always try to keep a steady speed and stay in the same lane—he will accelerate steadily and brake gently. That much weight demands it and his life depends on it. If you make a habit of watching trucks while you are on the highway, you'll begin to notice before long that you can almost predict a truck's movements.

Consider these two scenarios that often frighten and anger RVers. You're on a multi-lane highway approaching a cloverleaf intersection—a truck forward and to your right, signals left and pulls into your lane causing you to slow as you approach it. Why did he do that? You fume.



There was no one ahead of him. That's true, but the truck driver saw that there was traffic just entering the on-ramp at the cloverleaf ahead, and by moving to the center lane a mile before the ramp, he avoided having to suddenly brake or make a sudden lane change once he reached the merging traffic. Still, you say, it inconvenienced me. Yes, but much less than if the truck had been squeezed by the traffic into your lane at the last minute. But now, with this knowledge, you can look ahead to that merge lane and anticipate the truck's movements. For that matter if you are in the same position, avoiding the outside lanes at interchanges is good road management for the RVer, too.

The second scenario is the reverse of the same situation. The traffic is too heavy for the truck to move over safely before the cloverleaf, so instead he adjusts his speed to allow merging traffic to enter ahead of him. He may drop between five and ten mph, so the following traffic also slows—if you can see this situation coming into play up ahead you also can reduce speed and avoid having to brake. If the on-ramp traffic is also heavy, and they can't move, most trucks will maintain a steady speed through and past the merge lane. Now, for the motorist entering traffic, there are few more intimidating sights than an eight-foot-tall radiator bearing down on him. But, the merging motorist needs to consider his part in this traffic ballet. Knowing that the truck's speed remains constant, he can quickly gauge whether he has the time (and distance) to accelerate ahead of the truck or to

drop speed and slip in behind. While many RVers will tell you otherwise, a truck maintaining a steady speed is the safest thing for it to do. If you are the one merging, you should calculate where you will enter traffic while still negotiating the on-ramp. If you're the one on the highway, do the same by looking ahead. If you anticipate its movements you can easily run circles around that old pachyderm.

What else should you know about trucks?

When you come to a stop behind a truck, keep to the left of your lane so the driver can see you in his side mirror. Remember if you can't see the driver he probably can't see you.

Always leave plenty of room between you and the truck.

When a truck is forced to stop on an upgrade he may roll back. Also remember he may have a very heavy load and it will take him a while to get going. By leaving space it will also be much easier to change lanes and pass him.

Never tailgate, particularly trucks. Driving behind a truck is like having a sheet of plywood strapped to your hood. Your view is almost totally blocked and your only source of road input is his brake lights. If you can pass safely, do so. If not, back way off so you can see more than his trailer doors.

When you do pass, don't pull in front of a truck without leaving room. Trucks can't stop on a dime and you might





be the cause of a jackknife or your own accident. Once you have decided to pass and see that the way is clear—don't hesitate. Declare your intention to pass by signaling and follow through quickly and safely. Before re-entering the lane, wait until you see both of the truck's headlights in your rear-view mirror. This will ensure you are an adequate distance from the truck. Lastly, be sure you maintain your speed when you are in front of a truck.

When a truck is backing up, stay away from it. Don't sit there and wonder why that trailer is swinging toward you. Even though they have very large mirrors, there are all kinds of blind spots during a backing maneuver. Be patient and never cross behind it, or pass anywhere within the arc of a backing truck.

Trucks turn differently than cars—the rear wheels of the trailer tend to cut the arc of a turn shorter than the steering wheels. That's why you've seen trailers climb curbs. The only way to avoid this is to exaggerate turns, by either moving to the left before turning right or by driving very far into an intersection and then turning into a wide left turn. Sometimes as the truck moves left, a narrow, temporary lane is created to its right. If a car moves up on the right side of the truck it could get "squeezed" when the truck swings into its right turn. Always pay close attention to truck turn signals.

The center lane on multi-lane highways is the trucker's passing lane. On major roadways transport trucks are not allowed in the high speed (far left) lane. That means

they rely on the center lane to pass slower traffic. If you travel in the center lane, be aware of trucks attempting to pass each other. At least be sure you are traveling at the posted speed limit.

A truck following you downhill will gain speed; it has no choice because of the weight it's carrying. The speed the truck gains on the downhill will scrub off as it climbs the next hill. This is how trucks manage their road speed; but this speed up, slow down form of driving makes some RVers crazy. Well that's understandable, but what's interesting is that RVers (particularly with bigger rigs) have the same problem. Not only do they get push going downhill, they need that extra speed to climb the next one. The alternative is to brake on the way down and then have to crawl up the next hill with their four-way hazard lights flashing. This is one time that RVers and truckers should agree wholeheartedly—braking and crawling are bad for the rig. So again be aware of the trucks around you and know that on the downhill you will have to accelerate or move over, it's not fair to make that truck brake and then have to limp up the other side in low gear.

Always keep a large space cushion around your car or RV—you do not have to drive beside a truck. Increase or decrease your speed, change lanes, and be vigilant—maintain your space cushion. Don't begrudge the space that trucks need, accept them, understand them, and be safe.



## RV REVIEW

BY HOWARD J. ELMER

### Tiffin Allegro Red 37PA Top to bottom, this Class A is high end

Ask non-RVers to describe a Class A motorhome and they might reply: “It’s a bus with beds.” Ask someone who owns a Class A motorhome and they’ll take up your whole weekend describing the minute details and differences among brands. These varied descriptions are both right. But what both of these groups may have in common is that they dwell on the visible physical features of the coach. In other words, they’re describing the things they can see.

However, having driven many coaches across a very wide price range, I’ve found that the higher the retail price the more likely it is that what you are really paying for is something you can’t see—and that’s the chassis and powertrain.

Tiffin motorhomes of Red Bay, Alabama, builds the higher-priced coaches I’m talking about; but the construction of the chassis they leave up to Freightliner. So, when I recently had a chance to take a 2018 Allegro Red out for a drive I ended up spending about the same amount of time researching the chassis as I did driving and doing my walk-through.

Before I get into the spec’s involved in building a superior chassis, let me answer a question you might be asking about now: “How do you know how good a chassis is—especially when all the bits are under the coach?” Good question.

Straight answer—the quality of the ride. With this Freightliner, you feel the road-confidence of the chassis. Slip it into gear and it powers up smoothly with a supreme sense of confidence. At speed, it glides down the road, without any grinds, whistles, creaks or groans. As you pull through curves you can feel that the center of gravity on the coach is low and planted—there is simply no swaying of the body despite its height. The steering feels connected, yet it’s gentle on the hands and gives no rough feedback. In the case of the Allegro Red, the rear diesel engine design also offers a very quiet interior and the power comes on smoothly—there is no drive-line shudder or transmission noise; the air suspension supports the coach softly and firmly—simultaneously; the set-back front axle offers short turning circles and easy steering.

Freightliner Custom Chassis is part of the Daimler Group, which includes Mercedes Benz and Western Star trucks. These companies have a reputation for engineering leadership, a decent pedigree for FCC that builds what drives and supports the Red—but unlike some other cookie-cutter chassis makers they customize each and every chassis to the specifications of each brand, model, and respective floorplans. No manufacturers get the same chassis. This fact is key to achieving the quality of the ride I felt the first time I drove the Red.

So, while Freightliner finishes the chassis there are a few other well-known name brand suppliers that are integral in this chassis’ construction. Cummins supplies a 6.7L turbo-diesel engine (360hp—800 lb-ft torque)



that pushes power through a six-speed Allison automatic transmission; Michelin XZE2 22.5-inch radial tires on aluminum wheels turn on Detroit I-Beam axles while Bendix air brakes provide stopping power. Sachs shocks by Rolls-Royce and Neway air suspension support the body; and the electrical is made by Delco. All this is supported on 9 x 2.75-inch high-strength steel frame rails that run the full length of the coach.

Inside, the driver's cockpit is designed not only to be functional but also comfortable for the many hours you'll be spending in that powered leather seat. All the controls are plainly marked on rocker switches and easily within reach. The main three dashboard gauges provide all the vital engine data at a glance, while the push-button transmission and auxiliary controls are on the left. Fans, power blinds, cruise control, tilt wheel, outside feeds from three cameras, and panoramic visibility through the tinted glass all combine for one nice driving experience.

The floorplan in the Red is new this year. It features four slide-outs—both opposing. The bedroom slide also pulls out the bathroom wall with its double sinks. The 72 x 80-inch king-size bed is housed in the other slide—this one also has windows (when open) for a nice cross-breeze. The salon and kitchen slides open up a ball-room-sized space in the front of the coach, all the better to show off the ceramic tile flooring. With all this space, the L-shaped sofa and lounge recliner look right at home. The focus of this seating is the television over the fireplace set amidship. This large flat-panel TV (like the one in the bedroom) is connected to a surround-sound system and

can be fed by cable, antenna, satellite, or optional in-motion satellite dish.

My test unit featured a small workstation table with two chairs—this would double as the eating area. However, Tiffin gives you the option of a booth dinette or U-shaped dinette. Your choice. It's about how much company you expect—or want. The kitchen itself is a study in elegant efficiency. The classic cabinetry is all made of lacquered hardwood; the drawers slide on ball bearings and are a slow close design, while the countertops are textured solid surfaces. Note that the three-burner gas range and the sinks both have matching covers. The residential size double-door refrigerator features a freezer on the bottom while built into the cabinets is the convection/microwave oven. For cleaning up there is a standard plug-in central vacuum system.

The bedroom slides I mentioned open up a soothing space with windows, fans, mood lighting, built-in wardrobes, and a huge hanging closet that can also house a washer/dryer. A pocket door closes for privacy, though a second door gives night-time access to the bathroom. The bath itself also has a ceramic tile floor and a porcelain toilet with lots of space around it. The double sinks feature a deep, long, hard-surface counter with dual mirrored medicine cabinets above. The oversize shower has a built-in seat, towel bar, overhead skylight, and sliding glass door. The accent and direct lighting is nicely designed.

It's worth noting that when the slide-outs are closed,



they preserve a passageway through the coach so that everything (bedroom and bathroom) are still accessed while in transit or at a quick lunch stop.

The HVAC system in this Tiffin is designed to provide comfort in any weather—quietly. It features two low-profile roof mounted A/C units that work with a 15,000 Btu heat pump. Heating and cooling are diffused through a series of directional ceiling vents. Along with thick windows, ample insulation, heated tanks, and heavy duty electrical, the Tiffin Red is four-season capable.

Storage inside the Red is designed into every available space to carry everything from soup to nuts. But under the bus, you'll find another 119 cubic-feet of basement storage. These spaces are accessed through several latched doors all along the body of the coach.

A standard 8.0 KW Onan generator provides power when you're not plugged into power. It's diesel and draws off the coach tanks—so it could run for hundreds of hours, if needed. If you do find yourself boondocking with the Red, you'll relax knowing that you also carry 90 gallons of freshwater and 24 gallons of propane.

Many owners of Class A's opt to take a car along on longer trips. Here again, the Freightliner chassis and Cummins/Allison powertrain combine to offer up a 10,000-lb tow rating. More than enough capacity, even for a large tow-behind.

A purchase aspect of higher-end coaches, I should mention, is their ability to be personalized. It follows

that the more money you spend, the more inside perks you can afford. Tiffin caters to this want with a list of optional interior appointments that I couldn't even start to list—there are just too many. But often, buyers want something that is unique—on the outside. To scratch this itch, Tiffin offers six unique exterior paint schemes. This is full-body paint, not decals. They use premium-grade paints and seal them with four layers of superclear coat for ultraviolet protection. They then add an additional layer of scratch-resistant plastic coating, which protects the front of the coach, stairwell, and entry door lock.

While only a small group of RVers will ever own a Class A coach of this caliber, it's fascinating to see how all these components can be combined to create not only an opulent coach but one that drives better than most passenger sedans. Frankly, this was one unit I had a hard time returning. If you're in the market, you'll want to experience the Tiffin Allegro Red for yourself.

**2018 TIFFIN ALLEGRO RED 37PA**

<b>DRY WEIGHT:</b> 11,530 pounds	<b>LENGTH:</b> 39' 2"
<b>CHASSIS:</b> Freightliner	<b>HEIGHT:</b> 12' 10" (with roof A/C)
<b>ENGINE:</b> Cummins 6.7L turbodiesel	<b>WIDTH:</b> 101 inches
<b>TRANSMISSION:</b> Allison 6-speed automatic	<b>FRESH WATER:</b> 90 gallons
<b>WHEELBASE:</b> 252"	<b>BLACK WATER:</b> 50 gallons
<b>GVWR:</b> 32,000 lb	<b>GRAY WATER:</b> 70 gallons
<b>GCWR:</b> 42,000 lb	<b>LP GAS:</b> 24 gallons

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