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Snow **BIRDS**

Gulf Coast

A Winter Visitor
Publication
Spring 2018

**Spring
Happenings**

**Golf and
Baseball**

Snaps!

**Casino
Headliners**

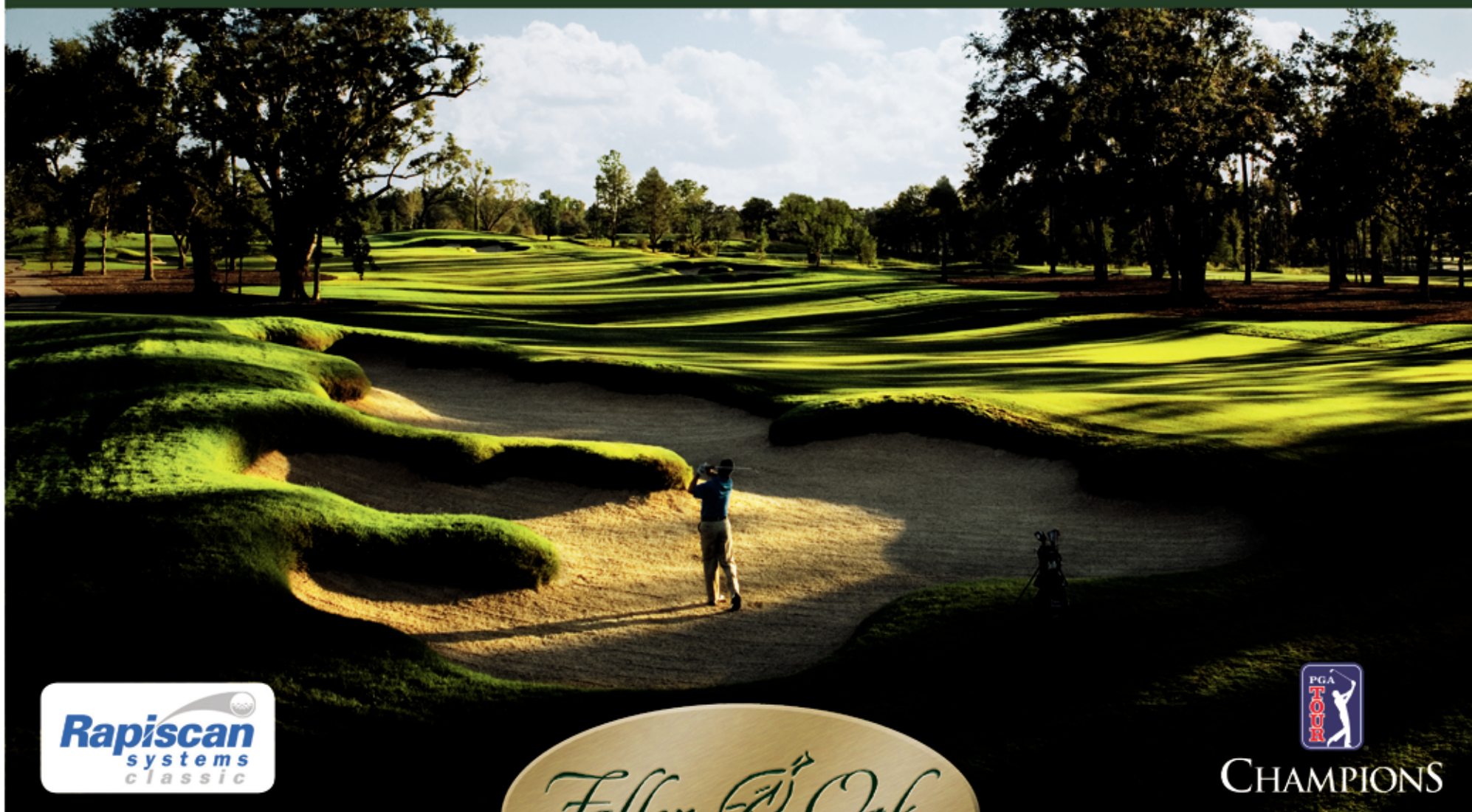
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Gulf Coast
Snow **BIRDS**

ON THE COVER
Married for 47 years, Wisconsin snowbirds Jan and Joe Sackett spend several months each year at Panama City Beach, Fla., where they enjoy biking, dancing and boating.

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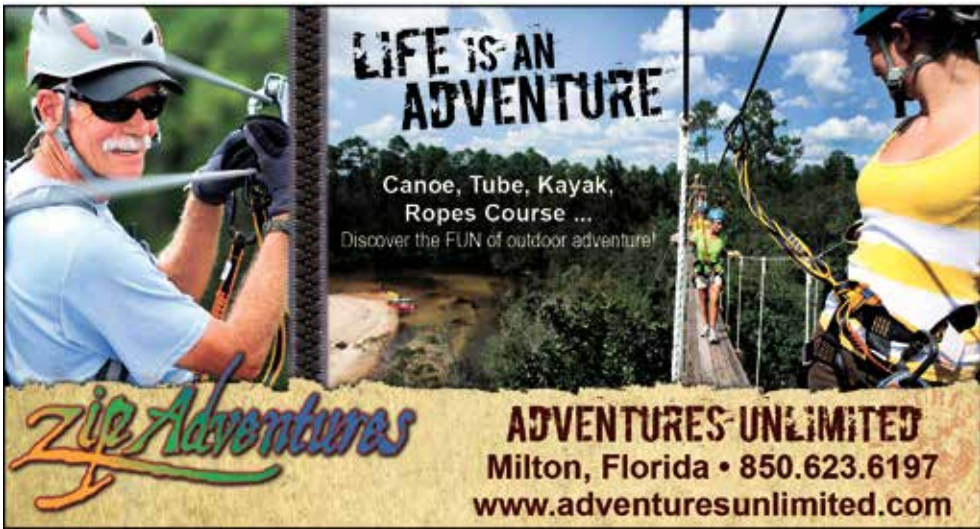
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Welcome!

When I was a child, we lived in North and South Carolina where we eagerly looked forward to taking vacations to the mountains (to see our Grandmother) and an annual trip to the beach.

Back in the 1960s, our vehicles didn't have air conditioning, so the windows almost always were down. I remember the feeling of excitement when we got our first peek of the hills and mountains. Our trip to the beach was a treat, and the headiness of the air was the first sign we were near our preferred destination of Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Today I can close my eyes and still remember.

Every once in a while, I have to remind myself how special it is to live so near a beach by taking a slow ride. I've found the best day is early Sunday morning before the church-goers and locals hit the road. My favorite ride is a gorgeous 10-mile stretch of the Gulf Islands National Seashore between Navarre Beach and Pensacola Beach. Huge white sand dunes hug the road on the north side while views of sea oats waving and the sparkling Gulf of Mexico complete the picture on the south.

Before you all leave this Spring, try to take a slow ride. Make a memory to last until your next visit.

In this issue we have researched many things to do here this spring from festivals and events to Easter egg hunts and St. Patrick's Day parades.

If you are hosting company check out our list of things to do for "the Grands." And since we know many of you have friends and family who fly here, we have put together a regional wrap-up of the airports and the non-stop flights they offer.

Please take a moment to sign up for our E-newsletter, called Seasons, so you can stay up on things happening here on the coast year-round and "Like" our Facebook page. I recommend that you do both because Facebook doesn't always push out a post to everyone who has "Liked" your page (unfortunately.)

Safe travels to everyone. Your winter home awaits.

Best,
Karen Harrell, Publisher@snowbirdsgulfcoast.com
850-291-1266

Want to know what Spring, Summer and Fall are like on the Gulf Coast? Sign up for our e-newsletter "Seasons" and find out! We are introducing new features and a redesign, soon. Register online at SnowbirdsGulfCoast.com. And if you "Facebook" - give us a "Like!"



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EMERALD COAST BOAT & LIFESTYLE SHOW Mar. 2-4, Aaron Bessant Park

SCOTTISH FESTIVAL Mar. 3, Frank Brown Park

AMERICANA MUSIC AT THE LODGE Mar. 3 at 6 p.m., Camp Helen State Park

EMERALD COAST CRUIZIN' CAR SHOW Mar. 7-10, Aaron Bessant Park

UNWINED Mar. 23-24, Aaron Bessant Park

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Going to the BEACH



With a sweeping view of the Gulf of Mexico, it's easy to see what lures Rhinelander, Wis., couple Jan and Joe Sackett to spend several months each year at Panama City Beach, Fla. "This is the reason we are here," Jan said as she gestured out toward the expansive balcony of the couple's fifth-floor condo. "Coming down here we wanted to be on the water. It's wonderful."

The couple has two married daughters and four grandchildren (ages 11 and 14

plus 6-year-old twins) who will be joining them for the first time on the Gulf Coast over the school spring break in late March. The additional family will share a large condo in the same complex so they can easily gather and play. The couple is used to having a water view at their riverfront home in Rhinelander, an area known as "Northwoods," that boasts many of the outdoor pursuits the couple like to do, including biking, hiking and boating. Their day usually starts with an hour-long walk on the beach and walking trails in the area. Jan also is an avid line dancer; an activity offered just minutes away at the Panama City Beach Senior Center and Frank Brown Park. Jan, 65, retired after 27 years as a school secretary, and Joe, 68, worked 35 years for the U.S. Postal Service. The first year the Sacketts stayed at the Gulf Highlands, an expansive resort townhome community located about



a block from the beach that offered an active social schedule where they met many friends. They still visit friends there, and they host many at their one-bedroom condo which features an expansive southwest-facing balcony and gorgeous sunsets. Next year the couple will be moving to a different Gulf-front complex nearby that offers storage so they can bring their bikes and secure them. They plan to explore the area and regional bike trails, something they do back in Wisconsin. Retirement has brought an opportunity for them to fulfill their dreams to travel.

They've vacationed in Hawaii, Mexico, Costa Rica, British Columbia, areas of south Florida and, along with four friends, took an extensive RV tour of Alaska. They also have visited friends who winter in nearby Pensacola Beach and Gulf Shores, Ala., and to check out the attractions.

Jan makes many friends through line dancing, and Joe brings a cadre of conversation-starting Green Bay Packers and Wisconsin Badgers gear to wear, and he is often stopped by other Snowbirds to talk sports.

Although they don't sing themselves, the couple enjoys meeting other Snowbirds several times a week at karaoke offered at two restaurant/bars in the area: Sharky's and Runaway Island. They also enjoy meeting locals there as well.

They cite the friendliness of the people and businesses in the area as a major reason the couple return to Panama City Beach. They prefer the quiet to the

winter crowds they found during their south Florida travels. Soon they will switch to grandparent mode where they will gladly show off the area they love to those they love best.



"Grands" tour of the coast: A whole new view

What to do? What to do? What to do?

This time of year, many Snowbirds play host to visiting family and friends and fret about "what are they going to do when not at the beach?"

The modern answer is, of course, plug in earphones and bury their faces in their phones to watch YouTube. Or, instead of having conversation with you, their fingers are furiously typing as they converse with friends on Snapchat or Instagram. This is not the vacation you imagined for them.

While you can't totally eliminate such behavior, here are some ideas:



INTERACTIVE MUSUEMS: These days kids know that museums aren't static and they are more likely to enjoy them. Downtown Mobile, Ala., offers several attractions within easy walking or a quick ride from each other. The Gulf Coast Exploreum, an interactive science center offers activities for the littlest visitors to tweens, teens and adults. Nearby, youngsters can scramble through the USS Alabama at Battleship Park and then venture over to the modern and cutting-edge GulfQuest, National Maritime Museum of the Gulf of Mexico. Venture to a working military base at Naval Air Station Pensacola which features interactive simulators and a Giant Screen theater for entertainment. In Fort Walton Beach, the Emerald Coast Science Center recently expanded and moved to a new location.

PIER WALK AND FISHING: Rig up a fishing pole or just take a walk on numerous piers. The Gulf of Mexico's longest pier is at Navarre Beach; Panama City Beach has three piers; Okaloosa Island and Pensacola Beach, Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Ala., each have modern piers rebuilt after Hurricane Ivan.



ZIPLINE! Soar over the treetops of the Blackwater River State Forest at Adventures Unlimited in Milton, Fla. Shop, dine and zip at Harborwalk Village in Destin or The Village at Baytowne Wharf in south Walton County.



EXPLORE A FORT: Drive west of Gulf Shores and explore Fort Morgan and then take the car ferry to Dauphin Island and historic Fort Gaines. In Florida, ride along scenic Gulf Islands National Seashore to Fort Pickens (which once housed Geronimo!).



RENT BICYCLES AND GO FOR A RIDE:: Investment in modern bike paths have ensured better safety. In Panama City Beach, try Conservation Park which features 24 miles of trails and more than a mile of boardwalks set among 2900 nature-filled acres. The numerous small beach communities along Scenic 30A enjoy nearly 19 miles of paved walking and bike paths along the Timpoochee Trail. Bike and walking paths encircle Okaloosa Island, Navarre Beach and Pensacola Beach where there are convenient stops to rest and dine. North of I-10 in Milton, the nearly 10-mile Blackwater Heritage State Trail follows the old Florida and Alabama Railroad. In Alabama, the sprawling Gulf State Park

features the Hugh S. Banyon Backcountry Trail with some 15 miles of trails set among six distinct ecosystems.

RIDES AND GAMES: OWA, a new theme park with 21 rides, recently opened in thriving Foley, Ala. Sam's Fun City in Pensacola will soon open the Emerald Coaster to add to its attractions; Water parks typically open in late spring including Panama City's Shipwreck Island (late April); Destin's Big Kahunas (late April); Pensacola's Sam' Fun City (late April) and Gulf Shores' Waterville USA (late May.) There are numerous Go-Kart ride facilities and Putt-Putt courses in each area.



DOLPHIN CRUISE: There is no greater thrill than to search for dolphins on the water. Outings are offered across the region at dozens of marinas.



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Snowbird Clubs

Send your club news to Publisher@
SnowbirdsGulfCoast.com

Each year there are a variety of activities put on either by Snowbirds or area organizations for the Snowbirds. If you have activities to share, please email: publisher@snowbirdsgulfcoast.com by the 5th of the month preceding publication (we publish Holiday, January, February and March each year.)

FLORIDA

PANAMA CITY: Panama City Senior Center: A hub of activity for Panama City Snowbirds is the sprawling senior center. Membership fees are just \$35/year. Activities include health, fitness and exercise; arts and crafts; fun and games and social and learning opportunities. Oatfield Center, 423 Lyndell Lane, Panama City Beach. Details: 850-236-3038 or 850-233-5065.

The Panama City Convention and Visitor Bureau: sponsors a series of events each year. To learn about plans for the 2019 season: 800-722-3224 or www.visitpanamacitybeach.com

The Ark: Formerly known as Noah's Ark, the popular winter program ran from Dec. 1 through the end of February. Activities included woodworking, creative writing,

bridge, embroidery on cards, exercise for seniors, darts, karaoke, clogging and dancing. Monthly cost: \$40. Located at 12902 Front Beach Road, Panama City Beach. Details: (850) 234-6062.

WALTON COUNTY: Activities include art, ballroom dance, casino trips, book discussion, bowling, cards and games, pickleball, computer, softball, golf, tennis, Zumba, fishing and more. Volunteers are needed to help administrate the activities. Membership dues are \$10 per year. There are numerous volunteer opportunities so don't be shy! For membership: Joan Dougall jmr166@gmail.com. Details: www.waltoncountysnowbirds.com

DESTIN: Meetings are held at "The Roost" – the Destin Community Center, 101 Stahlman Ave. The final weekly Tuesday meeting is 10 a.m. March 6. Meetings include entertainment, activities and information from local vendors. Club activities include cards and games, fishing, golf, tennis, pickleball, skeet shooting, cruises, casino trips and more. Details: www.destinsnowbirds.org.

FORT WALTON BEACH: With over 700 members, the Club offers activities,

events, camaraderie and fellowship. Registration 9 a.m. – Noon on Tuesdays. Annual fee is \$8. The final meeting is 10 a.m. March 6 at the Fort Walton Beach Recreation Center (132 Jet Dr. NW). The final scheduled social is 4:30 p.m. March 4, AJ's on the Bayou. Details: information@FWBSBC.com or www.fwbsbc.com

NAVARRE: The Navarre Beach Snowbird Club continues to grow and offers a variety of programs and social events. To learn more: navarrebeachsnowbirdsclub.com

PENSACOLA: A special VIP discount card is available at the Pensacola, Pensacola Beach and Perdido Key Visitor Centers for all Snowbirds.

The Pensacola Beach Community Church is sponsoring Trivia Night, 6 p.m. March 9. Cost is \$12.50 per person or \$100 per table of eight. Snowbirds also are invited to church services at 10 a.m. Details: 850-932-6628 or www.thebeachchurch.com/church-events.

Also, St. Ann Catholic Church in Gulf Breeze hosts the "Fun Bunch" senior group meeting at 11:30 a.m. every third Tuesday for lunch and Bingo, all are

welcome! Details: Darlene Goderski 850-677-8321 or online at www.stanngulfbreeze.org/seniors

PERDIDO KEY: The Perdido Key Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a "Snowbird Hootenanny" 11 a.m. March 1 at the world-famous Flora-Bama lounge. Cost is \$10 and includes food and entertainment. Vendors will be on hand with goodies. Details: www.visitperdido.com or 850-492-4660.

ALABAMA

GULF SHORES MEN'S COFFEE CLUB:

The Gulf Shores Men's Snowbird Coffee at Gilbey's Restaurant, 25775 Perdido Beach Blvd. in Orange Beach on Mon., Wed. and Fri., 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. This is the oldest continually active snowbird club with more than 280 members from 26 states and three Canadian provinces. Besides raising money for local charities, the club holds golf outings, sponsors casino trips and conducts breakfast meetings for members and spouses and throws horseshoes on Mon., Wed. and Fri. at noon at Meyer Park in Gulf Shores.

Snowbird Coffee Gathering, 9 a.m. Gulf Shores United Methodist Church. 1900

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Gulf Shores Parkway. The free event is geared toward the Snowbirds. Includes refreshment and entertainment, door prizes free event and open to the public with an emphasis on Snowbirds from all states. Details: Mary Rebert: maryrebert@yahoo.com or 269-330-3748

DAUPHIN ISLAND: The Dauphin Island Chamber of Commerce invites Snowbirds to visit the Welcome Center, 1016 Bienville Blvd., for info on island events including the twice-monthly Boardwalk Talks the first and third Wednesdays at 11:15 a.m. at The Estuarium. Island representatives are actively engaged in forming a club. Details: www.townofdauphinisland.org

SENIOR SNOWBIRDS: Meets Thursdays through March. Bring a dish to feed 10. Cost is 50 cents at the Adult Activity Center, 260 Clubhouse Dr., Gulf Shores, Ala. Details: Michael O'Rourke 251-981-6060

ILLINOIS: The 2018 Illinois Club meets the second and fourth Fridays through March 9 at GT's On the Bay (26189 Canal Rd, Orange Beach) at 7:30 a.m. RSVP: 630-738-8717

INDIANA: Indiana Club meets for breakfast at 8 a.m. on the second and fourth Thursdays through March 1 at 7:30 a.m. Luna's 25753 Canal Road, Orange Beach. Speakers at every meeting. Cost to join: \$5. Breakfast is \$10 including meal, tax and tip. Details: Bev Walker 513-519-9645 or bwalker@etczone.com

IOWA: Iowa Snowbirds invite lowans and guests to attend the final breakfast meeting March 7, 8:30 a.m. at the Perdido Beach Resort, 27200 East Perdido Beach Boulevard in Orange Beach. Cost is \$10.50 per person. There is no membership fee and all lowans and their guests are welcome at club events. The Iowa golf group can also sign up online. Details: iowa-Alabamagulfcoastsnowbirds.org

MICHIGAN: The Michigan Club final meeting is March 1 at Erie Meyer Civic Center in Gulf Shores. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. with coffee and donuts at 9 a.m. Meetings include entertainment, Club activities and door prizes. Membership dues are \$3 total per person per year. Details: www.michiganclubalabama.com.

MINNESOTA: The Minnesota Club meets

weekly through mid-March in our "home away from home" state of Alabama. Breakfast meetings are weekly Tuesdays at GT's on the Bay, 26189 Canal Rd, Orange Beach, Ala. Doors open at 7:30 a.m., Breakfast costs \$10. Info on golf, upcoming events or updates: www.mnal.org or www.facebook.com/mnalclub

MISSOURI: The club will meet for breakfast at 8:30 a.m. March 7 at Perdido Beach Resort (27200 Perdido Beach Boulevard, Orange Beach). Business meetings held at Phoenix V will alternate with breakfast. Details: www.mosnowbirds.org.

OHIO: The club's final breakfast meeting is 8 a.m. March 7 at Luna's. Details: Gayle Hofacker, gaylehofacker@gmail.com or 937-621-1700.

NEW YORK: New York State Snowbirds have been gathering for social times since 2000. The final lunch meeting is March 8. Registration and social time start at 11 a.m., lunch at 11:30 a.m. The club will order off a special menu with separate checks. The fee is \$1 per person collected at the door for expenses. Reservations to Frank and Tracy at 585-748-0432 or email

at nysnowbirds@gmail.com, no later than three days before the scheduled luncheon.

NORTH DAKOTA/SOUTH DAKOTA: The Gulf Shores, Ala.-based North and South Dakota Snowbird Club will meet at 8:30 a.m. for breakfast with a 9 a.m. meeting to follow March 6 at Luna's Eat & Drink, 25753 Canal Road, Orange Beach. The club also sponsors several other social events, and it collects food and infant items for donation. Details: Joyce 605-351-0274 or -+pdinsf@msn.com

PENNSYLVANIA: Pennsylvania Snowbird Club Members meet 8 a.m. March 7 for breakfast at BuzzCatz Restaurant Details: Rich Smith 908-420-8806 or bettyrich@rcn.com

WISCONSIN: The Wisconsin Snobird Club activities are open to all winter visitors to southern Alabama and northern Florida areas. Upcoming club meetings March 7, 14 at the Orange Beach Community Center. Meetings begin at 9 a.m. with updates, raffles. Coffee and doughnut social hour before. Details: Kenn 251-967-2463 or www.sites.google.com/site/wisconsinsnowbirdclub/company-calendar

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There are nearly forty restaurants, bars, delis and cafes in downtown Mobile, and we've also compiled a suggested list of activities you can do in two, four and six hours in Mobile:



TWO HOURS

MARITIME: About 230 steps from the Alabama Cruise Terminal (yes, we counted!) is the one-of-a-kind GulfQuest National Maritime Museum. GulfQuest is the first and only museum dedicated to the Gulf Coast's rich maritime traditions from its discovery in the 1500s to the present day and one of the only interactive maritime museums in the country. So before you head out into the Gulf, learn all about the Gulf. It'll make your cruise that much more interesting, believe us!

PORT & FORT: The downtown waterfront of Mobile, Alabama is full of rich history, culture and economic importance to the region. This bustling port welcomes ships from all over the world along with tug boats and barges that roam the many rivers of North America. See them all up close from a USCG Certified passenger vessel with Wild Native Tours. The city skyline, maritime museum, Austal shipyards, cruise terminal and cruise ship are also seen on this tour. Courteous and knowledgeable guides will educate and entertain as you cruise these local waters. After your port tour, be sure to visit the Fort of Colonial Mobile, an immersive, interactive exhibit about the people who colonized early Mobile.



FOUR HOURS

HISTORY LOVERS: Take an historic city tour, starting at the Visit Mobile Welcome Center, by car, van, trolley or duck boat. These usually last an hour to an hour and a half, which leaves plenty of time to explore historic downtown Mobile on foot, including the History Museum of Mobile and the Mobile Carnival Museum or hop across the Mobile River to board an authentic World War II battleship, the USS ALABAMA.

SHOPAHOLICS: Several new locally owned clothing boutiques, gift shops, vintage and antique stores and art galleries (some will ship your purchases home!) are located within blocks of each other downtown. We know you'll be grabbing some souvenirs in the Caribbean, but hey, taking a little bit of Mobile home with you is pretty awesome, too.

FAMILY FUN: The Gulf Coast Exploreum offers rotating exhibits and permanent activities designed to bring the scientist out in all of us. You'll notice an Oyster statue out in front of the Exploreum, which is a great starting point to walk The Oyster Trail throughout downtown Mobile (how many can you visit?). Mobile's newest addition to outdoor family fun is ArtGo, a self-guided free walking trail and outdoor art gallery that leads visitors to 33 public art pieces/installations. Pick up your map at the Mobile Arts Council at 318 Dauphin Street.



SIX HOURS

OUTDOORS: With a little more time on your hands, you can explore a little more of what the entire area has to offer. The crown jewel of Mobile, Bellingrath Gardens and Home is about 45 minutes west of the Alabama Cruise Terminal - plan to wander amongst the blooms for a few hours. Or, head east, just a few minutes of downtown and take an airboat ride, sightseeing cruise or guided kayak/canoe tours of the Mobile/Tensaw Delta (the views are a little different from the deck of the cruise ship but fascinating just the same!)

HISTORY AND CULTURE LOVERS: There are several historic homes in or near downtown, each offering guided tours. Pick up a Historic Homes brochure and plan to visit all five during your time here in Mobile. Hit the Mobile Museum Trail, visiting some of the previously mentioned downtown museums but also plan to stop by the largest art museum on the Gulf Coast, the Mobile Museum of Art, the Mobile Medical Museum, and the Archaeology Museum at the University of South Alabama.





3/7-10

Classic cars and beach go hand-in-hand!

The Spring edition of Emerald Coast Cruizin at Aaron Bessant Park, 600 Pier Park Drive in Panama City Beach, Fla., Thousands of classic cars, hot rods, custom cars and trucks at Aaron Bessant Park next to Pier Park. Fun event! Details: www.emeraldcoastcruizin.com

DAILY

"We, The Marines" on the The Giant Screen at the National Naval Aviation Museum - Daily shows. For information on tickets and show times, please call 850-453-2389 or visit www.navalaviationmuseum.org.

MONDAYS AND THURSDAYS

AMERICAN LEGION: Bingo 6 p.m. Mondays and 10 a.m. Thursdays at Gulf Shores American Legion, 6781 Gulf Shores Pkwy (AL-59.) Details: 251 948-6119

WEDNESDAYS

Seniors Softball, Oakland Terrace Park, 1900 W. 11th Street, Panama City, Fla. 55+ non-competitive and lots of FUN! Just bring your glove and join in. 1 p.m. Details: 850-238-0549.

Bingo Night, American Legion Post #240, 8666 Gulf Beach Hwy, Pensacola, Fla., 6 - 8:30 p.m. Details: 850-455-6111.

Boardwalk Talks, Estuarium, Dauphin Island Sea Lab Estuarium, 101 Bienville Blvd, Dauphin Island, Ala. First and third Wednesdays, 11:15 a.m. The Northern Gulf Institute presents informal conversations about all things scientific in the Gulf of Mexico region. Details: www.disl.org/estuarium or 251-861-2141

Winter Wednesdays, Bellingrath Gardens and Home, 12401

Bellingrath Gardens Rd, Theodore, Ala. Winter workshops include gardening tips and guest lectures. Reservations requested. Details: 251-973-2217 or www.bellingrath.org.

Through 3/18

20th Annual Gulf Coast Winter Classics Horse Show, Harrison County Fairgrounds, 15321 County Farm Road, Gulfport, Miss. United States Equestrian Foundation AA Rated Hunter-Jumper event with more than 1,000 of the sport's finest equine athletes from across the nation. and Wed.-Sun. Spectators attend free on Sundays. Details: 228-832-3691 or www.gulfcoastclassiccompany.com.

2/27

National Naval Aviation Museum located at Naval Air Station Pensacola. **"Breakfast and a Movie"** showing "Rocky Mountain Express." Fee: \$10 includes Chick fil A breakfast and IMAX movie. Presentation at 9 a.m, movie at 10 a.m. Details: 850-453-2389 or navalaviationmuseum.org

3/1-6

Columbus Ships Pinta and Nina In Perdido Key, Perdido Key Oyster Bar & Marina, 13700 River Rd., Perdido Key, Fla. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission: \$8 for adults, \$7 for seniors, and \$6 for students 5 - 16. Free for children ages 4 and under. Details: (787) 672-2152 or www.thenina.com.

3/1

BJ Thomas, 8 p.m., Imogene Theatre, 6866 Caroline St, Milton, Fla. An American popular singer, Thomas is particularly known for his hit songs of the 1960s and 1970s, which appeared on the pop, country, and Christian music charts. Details: www.theimogenetheatre.com

3/1,5,8

Snowbird Dance featuring DJ Jim Lawson, Boardwalk Beach Resort Hotel & Convention Center,

9600 S. Thomas Dr., Panama City Beach, Fla., 3 to 6 p.m. Details: 850-234-3484

3/2,7,9

Dinner & Show featuring Todd Allen Herendeen, 5:30 p.m. Boardwalk Beach Resort, 9600 S. Thomas Dr., Panama City Beach, Fla. Cost: \$22 for combo or \$10 show only. Details: 850-596-8125 or www.boardwalkbeachresort.com

3/3

Lumberjack Festival, 8 a.m., Pensacola State College, Milton, Fla. Features wide variety of events from axe throw, sawing, pole toss, knife throw, log roll, standing chop and more. Shop with vendors and crafters. Cost: \$5. Details: www.pensacolastate.edu/lumberjack

3/3-4

Gulf Coast Renaissance Faire and Pirate Festival, Santa Rosa County Fairgrounds, Fla. 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Details: <http://www.gcrf.us/>

Panama City Beach Scottish Festival and Highlands Games, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. at Frank Brown Park. Event includes Music by the Macgilliossa & The Barney Girls. Also, Scottish whiskey tasting, athletic competitions, Scottish & Irish foods, Pub tent, Irish Step Dancers, Scottish Highlands Dancers and more. Details: pcbscotfestival.com

St. Patrick's Day on the coast

3/10

Annual Hibernia St. Patrick's Day Parade & 5K Run, Downtown Biloxi, Miss. Parade featuring bands, military units, leprechauns, a horse-drawn carriage with the parade's Grand Marshal and Colleen, Irish trinkets, green beads and doubloons. Details: 228-265-3416 or 228-334-3280

41st Annual McGuire's St. Patrick's Day Prediction 5K Run, 9 a.m. With More than 5,000 participants, it is Pensacola's largest run and the nation's largest prediction run. The course opens to traffic at 10 a.m. Stragglers will be picked up by McGuire's bus. Register or get details: www.mcguiresirishpub.com/race-info.php

3/17

St. Paddy's Day Celebration Downtown, Uptown, All Around Town, Downtown Ocean Springs, Miss. Shopping and dining specials, live music and more! 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Details: 228-875-4424 or www.oceanspringschamber.com.



"Go Irish on the Island" St. Paddy's Day Pub Crawl, Pensacola Beach, Fla. Pub crawl features several participating beach bars, restaurants and hotels serving up Irish drink specials, music and mischief. The fun begins at 10:30 a.m. at Crabs We Got 'Em on Pensacola Beach. Details: www.pensacolabeachchamber.com



3/18

30A St. Partrick's Parade & Festival at Arnett's, 30-A, Fla. Live Irish music, dancers, food and more! Festival begins at 2 p.m., parade begins at 3 p.m. Presented by ResortQuest by Wyndham Vacation Rentals. Details: 30aparaade.com

Local Farmers' Markets

4 Convenient Locations

30A Farmers' Market
In the Rosemary Beach Community
28 S. Barrett Square
Rosemary Beach, FL 32461
Sundays Year Round
9am-1pm

Grand Boulevard Farmers' Market at Sandestin
Grand Park
(Between Tommy Bahamas and Cantina Laredo)
600 Grand Blvd • Miramar Beach, FL 32550
Saturdays Year Round: 9am-1pm

30A Farmers' Market at Palm Plaza
1003C John Sims Parkway
Niceville, Florida 32578
Saturdays Year Round:
9am-1pm

30A Farmers' Market at 30Avenue
12805 Highway 98 E
Inlet Beach, Florida 32461
Re-opening March 8, 2018
Thursdays Year Round: 9am-1pm

Contact: Diane Kolopanas • 850-499-4697

Easter Sunrise Services

Every Easter congregations across the Gulf Coast leave the pews behind and hit the beach to celebrate Easter morning as the sun comes up over the waves. Many of the services are non-denominational and host churches invite anyone in the community to attend! This year Easter falls on April 1.

Bellingrath Gardens and Home, 12401 Bellingrath Gardens Rd., Mobile, Ala. Live Oak Plaza between the Bellingrath Home and the Boehm Gallery. Service will begin at 6:30 a.m. and is open to everyone in the community. Admission is complementary from 6 to 8 a.m. Details: <https://bellingrath.org>

Navarre Beachside Church, Navarre, Fla. Community-wide Easter Sunrise service begins at 6 a.m. Regular Sunday service to follow at 8:30 a.m. Rain or shine at the Main Beach-Access Parking Lot on Navarre Beach. Details: (850)939-1533 or (850)748-7263 or www.beachsidechurch.com

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, 6:30 a.m. service on the beach at White Ave. and Hwy 90, Biloxi, Miss.

Coastline Calvary Church in Gulf Breeze, Fla. Sunrise Service, 6 a.m. Sunrise service with Baptisms at Pensacola Beach Pavillion followed by services at 9 and 11 a.m. Details: (850) 932-8197 or www.coastlinelife.com

The Beach Church, Pensacola Beach, Fla. Sunrise Easter Service, 6 a.m., Quietwater Boardwalk

Flora-Bama Church, 29603 Perdido Beach Blvd. Orange Beach, Ala. 6:30 a.m. sunrise service. Beach services at 9 and 11 a.m.

Sinfonia Gulf Coast presents Corinne Stillwell. Program includes Bartholdy's "Octet in E flat major, Op. 20," Piazzolla's "Four Seasons of Buenos Aires" and Copland's original suite from "Appalachian Spring." Tickets: \$29.50 to \$45. 7:30 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church in Destin, Fla. Details: SinfoniaGulfCoast.org or (850) 460-8800.

Mobile Chocolate Festival, The Grounds, Grounds Lane, Foley, Ala. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. All things chocolate from venues across the Gulf Coast. Details: 251-342-2809 or www.mobilechocolatefestival.com

Wine and Dine for Dravet in Honor of Charlotte, 6 p.m. Juana's Pagodas and Sailor's Grill, 1451 Navarre Beach, Fla. Wine tasting, a buffet meal, and live music by Stevie Hall. \$15 to taste wine, \$30 for buffet dinner, tickets at the door. Details: 850-939-1092 or www.juanaspagodas.com.

Americana Concerts, 6:30 p.m., Camp Helen State Park, 23937 Panama City Beach Pkwy., Panama City Beach, Fla. Featuring Sarah Mac Band from Tallahassee. Details: www.friendsofcamphelen.org

3/3-4

Riverwalk Arts Festival, Riverwalk Park, Downtown Milton, Fla. Art, heritage folk art, cultural performances, continuous music and food, the All County Youth Art Exhibit and Kids Fun Zone. Details: (850) 626-4499 or www.sracf.org

3/9

Bragg-Mitchell Mansion's Annual Spring Tea Fundraiser, 2 to 5 p.m. Treats, tea, and an informal look at one of Mobile's most iconic antebellum homes. Proceeds benefit the restoration and operation of the mansion. Tickets: www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3322696.

LODA ArtWalk, Downtown Mobile, Ala., 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., Enjoy local art, music, food and culture. Details: www.ncsmobile.org

3/10

World War II Living History - Fort Gaines Historic Site, 51 Bienville Blvd, Dauphin Island, Ala. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Experience a day in the life of a World War II soldier. Drills, authentic camping and Blacksmithing in the Fort's Original Blacksmith Shop. Details: (251) 861-6992 or fortgaines@outlook.com.

3/10-11

Emerald Coast Holistic Health Festival, Emerald Coast Convention Center, 1250 Emerald Coast Pkwy. Fort Walton Beach, Fla. Presented by Natural Awakenings. Details: echolistichealthexpo.com.

3/15

Garrison Keillor, 7 p.m. Saenger Theatre, 6 S. Joachim St.,

Mobile, Ala. Master storyteller, humorist and author. Longtime host of The Prairie Home Companion. Details: www.mobilesaenger.com

Spring Concert Series, 6 p.m. Oatfield Center, 423 Lyndell Lane, Panama City Beach, Fla. Sponsored by the Panama City Beach Senior Center, entertainment by "MUSIC R US." Cost: \$5. Food and drink available. Details: 850-233-5065 or pcbsc.com.

3/16-17

21st Annual Pensacola Senior Follies "CITY SLICKERS & COUNTRY COUSINS" at WSRE-TV, Jean & Paul Amos Performance Studio on College Blvd. and 12th Ave, Pensacola, Fla. A two-hour song, dance and comedy review with proceeds going to support various senior programs in the community. Tickets: \$15. Showtimes: 7 p.m. March 16; matinee 2 p.m. March 17 & 18. Details: 417-7736 or 453-3016.

3/24

The 3rd Annual Renaissance and Cultural Faire, Central Panhandle Fairgrounds Panama City, Fla., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults and one non-perishable food item per child for local food banks. LARPing (live action role play) tournament, Faerie Garden contest, Jousting Lite interactive demonstration, live entertainment. Explore international villages and flavors from around the world.

3/24

John Paul White, 8 p.m., Imogene Theatre, 6866 Caroline St, Milton, Fla. John Paul White's new album is a diverse collection spanning plaintive folk balladry, swampy southern rock, lonesome campfire songs, and dark acoustic pop. Details: www.theimogenetheatre.com

3/31

Elberta German Sausage Festival, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. 13052 Main St., Elberta, Ala. German sausage & sauerkraut, plus continuous entertainment for adults and children and over 200 arts & crafts vendors. Details: www.facebook.com/elbertasausagefest.

4/7-8

Pensacola JazzFest, Seville Square Park, Bayfront Parkway, Pensacola, Fla. JazzFest 2017 headliners include Greg Abate, Wayne Bergeron, Annie Sellick and Dimas Sanchez and Fusion Beat. Free event. 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Details: 850-433-8382 or jazzpensacola.com

4/12-15

Tall Ships Pensacola, DeLuna Plaza/Palafox Pier, Pensacola, Fla. Three complete festival days of fun with onboard tours, sail away ventures, entertainment, food, vending booths and more. Details: visitpensacola.com



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Snap!

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Alabama Lifestyles Expo



Bratfest

Lulu's Tropical Re-Union Wedding Vow Renewals - Destin



Snaps!



Perdido Key "Roost" at Skopelos



Pensacola Beach Bash



Panama City Beach Winter Resident Senior Prom



Cruise out of Mobile on the Carnival Fantasy

Proximity to a convenient cruise port is one benefit of spending the winter along the northern Gulf Coast.



The shortest drive is the "Port City" of Mobile, Ala., which is served by the Carnival Fantasy. After a successful 2017 season, the line renewed for 2018 with affordable four- and five-night itineraries to Mexico. Four-day cruises sail Thursday and return Monday with a port stop in Cozumel, Mexico. Five-day cruises sail Monday and return Saturday with additional options of Costa Maya or Progreso, Mexico.

2018 specialty cruises include:

- Six-day cruises April 29 and Nov. 11 that include Cozumel and Grand Cayman or Mahogany Bay (Roatan)
- Two eight-day sailings April 21 and Nov. 3 with additional port options including Key West, Nassau, Bahamas and Princess Cays
- A 10-day "Journey's" cruise Sept. 17 with

partial transit of the Panama Canal and a call in Limon, Costa Rica. Mobile served as Carnival's roll-out port last July for the new "Seuss at Sea" fleetwide program. The Fantasy is one of several Carnival ships to offer the program with fun activities such as the Green Eggs and Ham Breakfast with The Cat in the Hat and Friends; Seuss-a-Palooza Parade and Story Time, Dr. Seuss Bookville, a family reading venue on select ships, character interactions, Dr. Seuss toys and games, and popular movies shown on board.



Mobile officials expect to announce 2019 plans in the coming months. Cruise guests are invited to explore Mobile before and after their cruises with special information and discount packages. Information including a digital visitor guide can be found at: www.mobile.org/cruise.

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Boardwalk Talks
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on a range of science topics.

101 Bienville Blvd Dauphin Island, AL 36528
1-866-403-4409 www.sealabestuarium.com

Photo: R. Jones

Easter Egg Hunt and
Breakfast with the Easter Bunny
- March 24

Easter Sunrise Service
- April 1

Camellia Classic Open Car Show
- April 7

National Public Gardens Day
- May 11

Mother's Day Evening
Garden Concert
- May 13

Don't miss a bloomin' thing this spring.

Open Daily 8 AM - 5 PM
(Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas
& New Year's Days)

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Gardens and Home

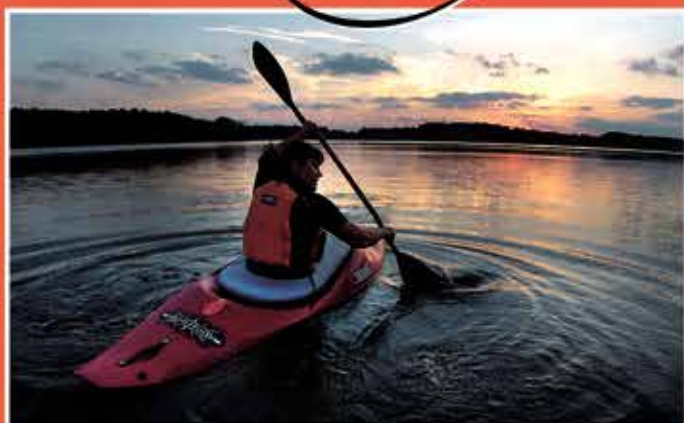


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Dauphin Island has biking and walking trails that stretch from one end of the island to the other, plus inland waters perfect for kayaking.



Shop a bit, Eat a bite.

If you love fresh seafood and unique gifts, you've come to the right place.

Ferry across the bay.

Ride the Mobile Bay Ferry and see how much fun it is to arrive on Dauphin Island by boat.

"Damn the torpedoes!"

Visit Fort Gaines, which played a key role in the Civil War battle in which those famous words were uttered.

Look, Touch, Learn.

Adults and children alike love the creatures and critters at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab's Estuarium.



Town of
Dauphin Island
- townofdauphinisland.org -

Dauphin Island
Chamber of Commerce
- dauphinislandchamber.com -

South Mobile County
Tourism Authority
- visitsomo.com -

Get to know spring in Mississippi

Great barbecue, Irish parades, a horse competition, live music, fine art, historic homes and more are on the calendar this spring along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Here are a few highlights.

3/17

Biloxi Main Street District's 12th annual Grillin' On The Green. Follow your nose to this day-long festival and barbecue competition. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on Biloxi's Town Green, 710 Beach Blvd. Biloxi, Miss. Festival attendees can also view the Hibernia Society's annual St. Patrick's Day Parade which passes at 2 p.m. Admission is free. Event features live entertainment all day. Details: 228-435-6339 or mainstreet@biloxi.ms.us.



3/10-11

2018 Gulf Coast BBQ & Bluegrass Festival, Beauvoir - The Jefferson Davis Home & Presidential Library, 2244 Beach Boulevard, Biloxi, Miss. This two-day festival features food, fun and fiddles! Enjoy some good ole pickin' and grillin' presented by Beauvoir and the Mississippi BBQ Trail. Shop, eat and listen to the tunes as you stroll across three acres of food vendors with live music provided by the Mississippi Songwriters Alliance. Enjoy a BCA sanctioned BBQ competition, kid's park provided by SpaceWalk of Gulfport, craft vendors and living history and cooking demonstrations. Details: Andrea Little at alittle@beauvoir.org or call (228) 388-4400 ext 217.

through March 18

Annual Gulf Coast Winter Classics Horse Show. Recurring weekly on Sunday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday at the Harrison County Fairgrounds, 5321 County Farm Road, Gulfport, Miss. The six-week United States Equestrian Foundation AA Rated Hunter-Jumper event includes 1,000 horses exhibiting and 12,000 spectators, making it the largest hunter/jumper show on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Admission is free on Sundays. The horse show is held in three adjacent all-weather rings, a large grass field and a covered arena with bleachers. Grand Prix Field opens Wednesday 10 a.m., Thursday and Sunday at 9 a.m., and Friday and Saturday at 8 a.m. with the Grand Prix at 2 p.m. Details: (228) 832-3691 or (843) 768-5503.



3/24-25

Spring Arts Festival: Herb, Garden & Art. A celebration of spring and the arts with more than 100 artists, crafters and plant booths. The event is an outdoor festival set amongst the historic live oaks in downtown Ocean Springs, Miss. Details: oceanspringschamber.com/springartsfestival/

4/4-7

Annual Mississippi Gulf Coast Spring Pilgrimage "April Showers bring Coastal Flowers." The event features elegant homes, gardens, and historic landmarks along the Mississippi Gulf Coast from Pascagoula to Diamondhead. The group was founded 66 years ago when Coast Garden Club women got together to talk about their gardens, have refreshments and form friendships while enjoying each other's homes. The group grew and soon clubs from each town were welcoming each other to gardens and home events. They later became "The Gulf Coast Council of Garden Clubs." Details: www.springpilgrimage.com



4/7-8

Annual Art in the Pass. 10 a.m. -5 p.m. at the War Memorial Park. Features fine arts, crafts, music, food and more this spring in a beautiful setting overlooking the sparkling waters of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. A hundred artists from 15 states participate in the two-day juried festival that showcases works in a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking, pottery, and more. The Marine Cuisine Pavilion offers free cooking demonstrations by local and regional chefs using fresh Gulf seafood both days. Details: (228) 452-5969 or (650) 743-0870

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 Perdido Bay (Lillian), Spanish Fort **(800) 446-0886**

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Casino Fun

3/2

Village People & Sister Sledge, 8 p.m., Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd, Biloxi, Miss., Details: 888-566-7469 or www.beaurivage.com

3/9

The Pointer Sisters, 8 p.m. IP Casino Resort & Spa, Studio A, 850 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Miss. 8 p.m. Details: 228-436-3000.

3/10

Irma Thomas, 8 p.m. Golden Nugget Biloxi, 151 Beach Blvd., Biloxi, Miss. 8 p.m. Details: 800-745-3000.

3/16

Clay Walker, 8 p.m. IP Casino Resort & Spa, Studio A, 850 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Miss. 8 p.m. Details: 228-436-3000.

3/16

Kansas, 8 p.m., Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd, Biloxi, Miss., Details: 888-566-7469 or www.beaurivage.com

3/17

Tiffany Haddish, 8 p.m., Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd, Biloxi, Miss., Details: 888-566-7469 or www.beaurivage.com



3/20

Aaron Lewis, 8 p.m. Hard Rock Casino 777 Beach Blvd., Biloxi, Miss. Details: (877) 877-6256 or (228) 374-7625 or www.hardrockbiloxi.com

3/20

Cookie Watkins – A Tribute to Tina Turner, 8 p.m. Island View Casino, 3300 W. Beach Blvd., Gulfport, Miss. Details: 1-877-774-VIEW (8439) or www.islandviewcasino.com

3/23

Neil Sedaka, 8 p.m. IP Casino Resort & Spa, Studio A, 850 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Miss. 8 p.m. Details: 228-436-3000.

3/23

Maze Featuring Frankie

Beverly, 8 p.m. Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd, Biloxi, Miss., Details: 888-566-7469 or www.beaurivage.com

3/24

Thompson Square, 8 p.m. Island View Casino, 3300 W. Beach Blvd., Gulfport, Miss. Details: 1-877-774-VIEW (8439) or www.islandviewcasino.com.

3/30

Phillip Phillips, 8 p.m. Hard Rock Casino 777 Beach Blvd., Biloxi, Miss. Details: (877) 877-6256 or (228) 374-7625 or www.hardrockbiloxi.com

3/30

Country Unplugged – David Lee Murphy, Joe Diffie, Mark Chesnutt, 8 p.m. IP Casino Resort & Spa, Studio A, 850 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Miss. 8 p.m. Details: 228-436-3000.

4/6

Trace Adkins, 8 p.m. IP Casino Resort & Spa, Studio A, 850 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Miss. 8 p.m. Details: 228-436-3000.

4/6

David Feherty, 8 p.m. Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd, Biloxi, Miss., Details: 888-566-7469 or www.beaurivage.com

4/13

The Temptations, 8 p.m. IP Casino Resort & Spa, Studio A, 850 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Miss. 8 p.m. Details: 228-436-3000.

4/13

Ron White, 8 p.m. Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd, Biloxi, Miss., Details: 888-566-7469 or www.beaurivage.com

4/20

Kool & The Gang, 8 p.m. Beau Rivage Resort & Casino, 875 Beach Blvd, Biloxi, Miss., Details: 888-566-7469 or www.beaurivage.com



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CP33276



PGA Tour Champions play for \$1.6 million at Fallen Oak, Biloxi, Miss.

Lots of changes are coming to the Rapiscan Systems Classic PGA Champions Tour event in March at Fallen Oak Golf Club near Biloxi, Miss. The one thing that won't change is the great golf that Snowbirds and other fans will see during the three-day tournament.

The Champions Tour – which features golfers over the age of 50 - moved the event earlier in the spring than in years past. It is set for March 23-25.

"We're hoping for some good weather; hopefully it will be drier," said Whitney Day, tournament manager. Another change is that for the first time in its nine-year history, the event has a title sponsor. Rapiscan Systems signed on for three years.

The company, which makes metal detectors used at airports across the country, provides security screenings and provides security for borders and ports. "We haven't had a title sponsor in the past," Day

said. "That gives us the flexibility to do some things we couldn't do in the past. We're making the fan experience better."

That will include an interactive area that will showcase many of the things that Rapiscan Systems does. Another change is that general admission tickets will be free to fans. Parking is \$10 and includes a shuttle between the parking lot and the golf course.



A total of 78 PGA Tour Champions players will be vying for a purse of \$1.6 million in three days of action over the 7,054-yard, par-72 course. Two-time defending champion Miguel Angel Jimenez will return, as will Bernard Langer, Fred Funk, John Daly, Colin Montgomerie, Corey Pavin and Vijah Singh, among others.


"We are getting new commitments every day," Day said.


The event pumps an estimated \$15.5 million into the local economy each year. The tournament will be broadcast on The Golf Channel.

More information: www.pgatour.com/champions/tournaments/rapiscan-systems-classic.html







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Pensacola Blue Wahoos

For Snowbirds who stick around the Gulf Coast into April, professional baseball is offered in several locations.

Teams in Pensacola, Fla., Mobile, Ala., and Biloxi, Miss., are all part of the Southern League, a Double-A level ball. That level of play showcases up-and-coming players, some of whom will eventually make the major leagues.

PENSACOLA BLUE WAHOOS: The team begins its seventh year of operation on Thursday, April 5 at their rivals, the Mobile BayBears. The Blue Wahoos then have their home opener the following week on Wednesday, April 11 against Chattanooga at Blue Wahoos Stadium along the scenic waterfront in downtown Pensacola. The Pensacola team is the defending co-champions of the Southern League. They will have a new manager, Jody Davis, who was a two-time All-Star in the major leagues as a player. He's taking over for Pat Kelly, who was promoted to manage the Cincinnati Reds' Triple-A team in Louisville.

For the third straight season, the Blue Wahoos did not raise ticket prices, which range as low as \$5 to \$19.

Information: www.pensacolabluewahoos.com.

BILOXI SHUCKERS: The Shuckers enter their third season of operation, playing out of MGM Park. They finished second overall last season in the South Division by 1.5 games to the Blue Wahoos.



Biloxi Shuckers

They will open their home season on Wednesday, April 11 against the Mississippi Braves. Ticket prices range from \$7 to \$50.

Information: www.biloxishuckers.com.

MOBILE BAYBEARS: After almost 20 years of playing in Mobile, the BayBears are leaving — but not for a couple more years. The team will play the 2018 and 2019 seasons in Mobile at Hank Aaron Stadium before moving to Madison, Ala., under near ownership. The BayBears open the season Thursday, April 5 against their rivals, the Blue Wahoos. Information: www.mobilebaybears.com.

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Gulf Coast airports are ready to get you there (and back)

By Louis Cooper

While many snowbirds make their way south every year by way of ground transportation, some fly here, too. Yet more have family and friends who fly in to visit them while they're wintering here.

The communities of the Gulf Coast are fortunate to be served by several top-notch regional airports served by all of the major airlines with direct flights to most major American cities.

All of the Gulf Coast's regional airports say they are experiencing growth.

Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport

The Panama City area has the newest airport facility in the region with the Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport. That airport opened only eight years ago has just begun to spread its wings.

Currently, Delta, Southwest and United provide service to Beaches International, with another major provider getting ready to land.



"Beginning June 7, 2018, American Airlines will provide daily non-stop service to Charlotte-Douglas and Dallas/Fort Worth international airports," said Parker W. McClellan, Jr., the executive director of Beaches International. "Those two airports serve as two of American Airlines' largest hubs, opening up east and west coast destinations for local passengers." Also, beginning June 9, Southwest will add non-stop flights to Denver, and will return with enhanced non-stop service to Austin and Chicago.

"In summer 2018, (we) will offer more than 650 one-stop destinations and international connections," McClellan said. "During the summer months, we anticipate that there will be near 7,100 passengers arriving and departing ... each Saturday."

In 2017, Beaches International saw more than 900,000 passengers. Although the airport doesn't have solid numbers for snowbird traffic, McClellan said the airport is a great fit for winter visitors.

Our "location is ideal for snowbirds. Located only 20 minutes from Panama City Beach, (it) is the best airport choice for travelers seeking a beach vacation," he said. "Whether visiting Panama City Beach, Florida's Forgotten Coast or the 15 beach neighborhoods of South Walton, the area offers sugar-white sand and emerald green water, excellent restaurants and some of the world's best sport fishing



and golf year-round."

For more information go to www.iflybeaches.com or call 850-763-6751.

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport



Located adjacent to Eglin Air Force Base, the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport is in the midst of a growth spurt, according to deputy director Michael Stenson. "Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport is the fastest growing airport in Florida and one of the fastest growing in the entire U.S.," Stenson said. "It has grown in the last two years from 776,767 passengers in 2015 to 1,175,894 in 2017, which is an increase of over 51 percent."

"This increase is not only due to air service to new cities, but all (of our) airlines have up gauged from smaller regional jets to larger mainline aircraft and increased frequencies to key markets."

Commercial airlines that serve Destin-Fort Walton

Beach include American, Allegiant Air, Delta and United Airlines. Non-stop service is provided to major cities like New York, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Washington, Kansas City and St. Louis.

Snowbirds should find the Destin-Fort Walton accommodating, Stenson said.

It "offers convenient and free curbside assistance. Our free shuttle service keeps passengers out of the elements when traveling from the parking lot to the terminal," he said. "There is also a convenient pet relief area located between the parking lot and the terminal where you can bring your pet before and after flights."

For details about the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport, go to www.flyvps.com or call 850-609-4711.

Pensacola International Airport

About 60 flights a day land or take off from Pensacola International Airport. In 2017, the Pensacola facility welcomed more than 1.7 million travelers.

Six commercial airlines serve Pensacola: American, Delta, Silver Airways, Southwest, United and Frontier.

"Nonstop air service opportunities have truly grown over the years with the new routes on Southwest and American," said Rebecca Oberto, Pensacola's marketing manager. "Frontier will be starting service out of Pensacola in April with nonstop service to Denver and Chicago."



Direct connections available from Pensacola include: Atlanta, Austin, Charlotte, Chicago Midway, Chicago O'Hare, Dallas/Fort Worth, Dallas Love, Denver, Houston Intercontinental, Houston Hobby, Kansas City, Nashville, Miami, Orlando, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Tampa, and Washington DC-Reagan National.

"We have an air service development team that is constantly working with the airlines' route development teams and the community to see what the air service needs are and if/how we can support it," Oberto said.

Snowbirds and their families should find the Pensacola International Airport friendly and serviceable, she said.



"We are a small and friendly airport that is easy to navigate through. We are about three miles from the interstate and a quick 10-15 minutes to the downtown area and the beach." For more information, call 850-436-5000 or go to flypensacola.com

Mobile Regional Airport

Flights in and out of Alabama's port city are getting more plentiful and more luxurious.

"Mobile Regional Airport is on a two year growth streak," according to Brian Belcher, the airport's director of marketing, communications and air



service development.

"We grew 4.5 percent in 2016 and 2.8 percent in 2017," he said. "The airlines have added capacity with larger aircraft and we now have a first-class cabin on every route served from Mobile."

Mobile's commercial airlines include American, Delta and United, offering non-stop service to Houston, Dallas, Chicago, Charlotte and Atlanta. In 2017, 1.2 million passengers came through the facility.

"The most recent city added was Chicago (in 2013)," Belcher said. "We are excited about all the routes served here, but we are actively trying to attract new and improved service every day."

Snowbirds are well-served Mobile's airport, he said. The facility boasts free Wi-Fi, an executive lounge for business travelers and military personnel and easy access to the city's cruise ship terminal. For more information about the Mobile Regional Airport, call 800-357-5373 or visit www.mobairport.com.

Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport

When you're talking about airports, being huge is not always an advantage. Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport.

"It is a great airport for senior citizens," according to Teckie Hinkebein, the airport's marketing director.

"The parking garage is close to the terminal and is very convenient and affordable," Hinkebein said. "The airport is small, and easy to navigate. Wait times are very short both at ticketing and in the security line. Once travelers fly into (Gulfport-Biloxi), they

are within a short drive of all popular tourist destinations along the Mississippi Gulf Coast."

Allegiant Air flies from the Mississippi coast to Orlando-Sanford; American connects to Dallas/Fort Worth and Charlotte; Delta goes to Atlanta, and United provides service to

Houston. Sun Country Airlines provides seasonal service to Minneapolis/St. Paul.

"United, American and Delta all offer easy connections to destinations throughout the U.S. and beyond,"



Hinkebein said.

Gulfport-Biloxi saw 6.8 percent growth in 2017, serving about 650,000 passengers.

For more information about Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport, go to www.flygpt.com or call 1-866-4GPTBLX.

Air service in New Orleans

About 150 flights leave Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport every day. It hosts 14 airlines and serves 57 nonstop destinations in North America, Europe, the Caribbean and Central America. with about 150 daily departures. For details, visit www.flymsy.com or call (504) 303-7500.

Seasons

Sign up for our new e-newsletter, **Seasons**, to stay up-to-date year-round!

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Snowbirds Gulf Coast

SPRING festivals

Warm, sunny days and cool breezes create the perfect weather for celebrating spring at festivals across the Gulf Coast. Arts, crafts, flowers, food and music are all in the spirit of the season as we say goodbye to our brief (but chilly!) winter and prepare for the time of year we like best: Outdoors all day, every day. Make plans to attend these amazing local fests and build in the time to explore a new community!

Festival of Flowers

March 22-25, Providence Hospital Campus, 6701 Airport Blvd., Mobile, Ala. The annual Festival of Flowers is the largest floral and garden event on the Greater Gulf Coast. More than just a walk in the park, the 2018 event, sponsored by Wells Fargo, is "A Celebration Promenade," a showcase of the ultimate floral and garden excellence and creativity. Landscape Architect Blake Smisson, PLA, ASLA joins the team designing and creating a park setting on the Providence campus, including landscape gardens of "The Square," "The Meadow," "The Carousel" and "The Zoo" on the eight-acre festival site. Spend a day at the Festival and a day taking in acres of spring blooms at Bellingrath Gardens and Home. For more information about special group packages: Shanna Bennett at 251.459.8986 or sbennett@bellingsrath.org. Details: festivalofflowers.com



Forgotten Coast Plein Arts Festival En Plein Air

May 4-13, Various locations in Port St. Joe, Apalachicola and St. George Island, Fla. Now in the 13th year of documenting the landscape and culture of the last vestige of authentic "Old Florida," Forgotten Coast en Plein Air, America's Great Paint-out, is among the world's most prestigious plein air events. The invitational features 20 internationally acclaimed artists and six "Florida's Finest en Plein Air" artists honored as Plein Air Ambassadors, plus the Plein Air Academy's Master Artist Faculty. Includes expanded exhibits, Collectors' Forum, guest speakers, and other activities celebrating the beauty of Florida's gulf coast. Details: forgottencoastculturalcoalition.wildapricot.org/



South Walton ArtsQuest

May 12 - 13, Grand Boulevard at Sandestin, 560 Grand Blvd Miramar Beach, Fla. The 30th Annual ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival will showcase over 150 local, regional and national fine artists throughout the streets of the Town Center in Grand Boulevard at Sandestin. Live music, family entertainment, great food, and "ImagiNation: where kids rule." ArtsQuest kicks off Art Week South Walton. Produced by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County, ArtsQuest is a juried show that includes artists in the categories of ceramics, fiber, glass, jewelry, metal, mixed media, oils & acrylics, digital art, photography, sculpture, wood and works on paper. Details: www.artweeksouthwalton.com/artsquest/

Gulf Breeze Celebrates the Arts

March 10 - 11, Gulf Breeze High School, Gulf Breeze, Fla. Gulf Breeze Arts, Inc. and the City of Gulf Breeze are proud to host the 24th Annual Gulf Breeze Celebrates the Arts Festival. Gulf Breeze Arts, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization dedicated to the education and support of the art community in Santa Rosa and Escambia counties. In its partnership with the city of Gulf Breeze, GBAI has donated over \$70,000 in festival proceeds to community art programs, schools and college scholarships. Details: www.gulfbreezearts.com/



Fairhope Arts and Crafts Show

March 16-18, Downtown Fairhope, Ala. The Annual Fairhope Arts and Crafts Festival is celebrating its 66th event in downtown Fairhope presented by The Fairhope Arts and Crafts Committee and the Fairhope Arts and Crafts Foundation, the City of Fairhope, Downtown Merchants and Eastern Shore Art Center. One of the oldest arts festivals on the gulf coast, the even draws more than 230 exhibitors from across the country who bring work in a wide variety of media. Visitors can also enjoy live entertainment and festival cuisine. The festival was chosen as one of the top events in the southeast for March by the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and is one of the top 20 events selected by the Southeast Tourism Society. The festival was also selected in the Top 10 in 2017 by Sunshine Artists Magazine. Hours are 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Friday through Sunday. The festival is free to the public. Details: <http://fairhopeartsandcraftsfestival.com>



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Blue skies!

The roar of an F/A 18 Hornet signals the return of spring and the U.S. Navy Blue Angels Demonstration Squad to its home base at Naval Air Station Pensacola.

The team invites the public to witness their practices each year including autograph sessions on select dates after practice at the National Naval Aviation Museum. Practice usually starts at 11:30 a.m. and is free to watch from the outside viewing area, located at the Museum Flight Line.

Practice dates include March 20, 21*, April 3, 4*, 10-11*, 17-18*, 24-25*, May 1-2*, 8-9*, 15-16*, 29, July 10-11*, 17-18*, Aug. 15, 21, 22*, 28, 29*, Sept. 4-5*, 11-12*, 18-19*, Oct. 17* and 23-24*.

Visitors are invited to tour the free, expansive museum (open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.) year-round. There is a fee for the Giant Screen Theater which features several different movies each day. There also is a gift shop and restaurant available. Exhibits and attractions include flight simulators, more than 150 historic aircraft and exhibits from every era, "Homefront" which features what life was like during WWII and more.

The Blue Angels have 32 shows on its regular scheduled this year more than 30 cities. The team has two Pensacola shows on July 14 (Pensacola Beach) and Nov. 2-3 (Pensacola NAS) and also one in Biloxi, Miss., July 21-22.

*denotes autograph session after practice.

If Attending Practice

Location: Aboard Naval Air Station Pensacola

Visitors 16 and older must have identification. Visitors must enter and exit through the west gate off Blue Angel Parkway. Details: 800-327-5002
Signs are posted to direct visitors to viewing and parking locations, including limited parking for disabled visitors. Open bleacher seating is available for seating 1,000 people. Chair service is provided at each practice session, a limited quantity of chairs are available for a fee of \$3 per chair good for that day's practice session. Concessions (bottled water, sports drinks, light food and treats) and merchandise are also available. Chair service, concessions and merchandise are provided by the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation, and proceeds support the Museum and Foundation programs.

Blue Angels Fast Facts:

- An estimated 15 million spectators view the squadron during air shows each year.
- The highest maneuver performed in an air show is the vertical rolls performed by the Opposing Solo, up to 15,000 feet and the lowest maneuver performed in an air show is the Sneak Pass, performed by the Lead Solo at 50 feet.
- The fastest speed flown during an air show is about 700 mph (just under Mach 1; Sneak Pass), and the slowest is about 120 mph (Section High Alpha).
- The basic acquisition price of a single F/A-18 Hornet is approximately \$21 million.
- The F/A-18 can reach speeds just under Mach 2, almost twice the speed of sound or about 1,400 mph.
- An F/A-18 weighs about 24,500 pounds empty of all ordnance and aircrew.
- The smoke is produced by pumping biodegradable, paraffin-based oil directly into the exhaust nozzles of the aircraft where the oil is instantly vaporized into smoke. It enhances the safety of flight by providing a means by which solo pilots can see each other during opposing maneuvers. It poses no hazard to the environment.



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Blue Angels Practice

March 20 & 21*

The world-famous Blue Angels are based at NAS Pensacola and can be seen practicing over the Museum at NAS Pensacola. Practices begin at 11:30 a.m. and last about 55 minutes. Admission to practice is FREE and open to the public.

The team visits the Museum to answer questions and sign autographs after most Wednesday practices. Museum visit days are marked with a (*).

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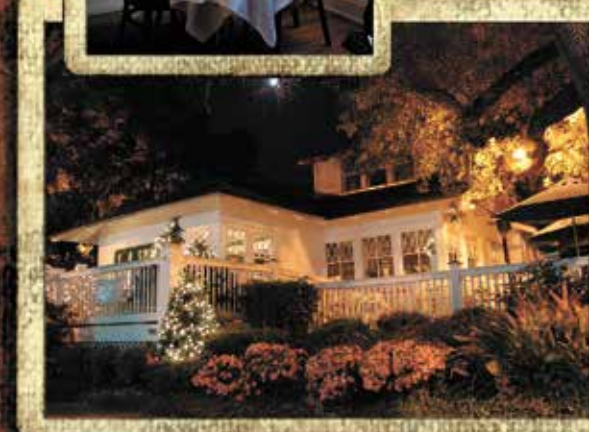
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Sean of the South: Flu fears and the wisdom of years



DEAR SEAN:

All my friends have the flu, I'm seeing all this bad stuff online, and I'm worried because of it. If my friends have the flu, then that means I'm next. I got a flu shot, but I keep hearing bad things, and I'm really scared.

What should I do?

FOURTEEN-IN-BIRMINGHAM

DEAR FOURTEEN:

You're not alone here. As much as I'd like to claim to be Captain Fearless, I've been washing my hands so often my knuckles are hairless.

But, before we go any further, first, we're going to take a deep breath. Ready. Go.

Now, hold it. Hold it. Hold it.

Let it go.

Feel that? That total-body feeling?

You know what that is? That's us NOT having the flu.

Okay. Now, let's turn off TV's, computers, phones, and avoid internet headlines in all caps like:

"THE WORST FLU IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND, CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS."

Let's go talk to Granny instead.

Granny will put our minds at ease by telling us that sickness like this is nothing new in history.

Case and point: before the Civil War, a worldwide bubonic plague broke out. They called it "black death." It made today's flu look like a day in Aruba. Then there was the influenza pandemic of 1889. Nearly 1 million died. That was no picnic.

And I'm just skimming the surface.

There's a long list of adversities our ancestors fought. Yellow fever, smallpox, the Great Depression, World War II, gasoline shortages, Windows 98, and Barry Manilow.

Let's start with the Depression. It was the end of the world for many people. Families without water, food, toilet, living in tents, picking cotton for

pennies, dying from malnutrition.

Next, we'll ask Granny about World War II. 80 million died during those hellish years. Let that number sink in.

Maybe Granny will tell us about boys like, Luke Jameson, who fought in that Great War.

He was a nice-looking boy. Six-foot-two. He endured measles and a Great Depression. Then, at age 16 he lied to the Army recruiter and enlisted.

Different times.

They sent him to the war in Europe. He was wounded in the spine. While being carried by medics, a military vehicle ran over him.

He crawled to safety—nearly every bone in his body broken. He was in rehab for years. Years, with a "Y."

When he finally made it home, his family was standing on the front lawn to greet him. He was in uniform. He walked with a limp. He was different, they say.

In a good way.

I met him when he was an older man.

His room was peppered with photos of bass fish, bird dogs, and buck hunts. He was a jovial thing.

I asked how he managed to stay so happy.

"Simple," he said. "I'm not afraid of anything."

He went on to say that he had survived two heart attacks, one wife, war, famine, spinal surgeries, the measles.

You name it.

"Once you're not afraid," he said.

"Nothing can touch you."

I'll never forget those words.

So, Granny will probably tell us the same things. Then, she'll remind us to keep the televisions off. She'll tell us not to fear flu, famine, or even death.

Because Granny knows that worry is a sickness far more dangerous than flu. And worse, there's no vaccination for worry.

So here's a message from an old veteran who's no longer with us: "Don't be afraid of anything."

And here's one from me:

Wash your hands until your skin bleeds.

Sean Dietrich is a columnist and novelist known for his commentary on life in the American South. His work has appeared in Southern Living, The Tallahassee Democrat, Good Grit, South Magazine, Yellowhammer News, the Bitter Southerner, Thom Magazine, The Mobile Press Register and he has authored several books.

Find your copy of Snowbirds Gulf Coast!

Snowbirds Gulf Coast prints four editions each winter: Holiday, January, February and Spring that are distributed regionally from Panama City Beach, Fla., west along the Florida panhandle to the Alabama Gulf Coast and Biloxi Visitor Center.

We also push out pdf versions of the print edition through our e-newsletter (sign up online) and Facebook page: Snowbirds Gulf Coast ("Like" the page to receive information.)

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		Laketown Wharf
		Resort Collection
		Seahaven Beach



Are you checking out of your rental soon and have extra food?

Consider donating (non-perishable) food items to a local charity.

A few ideas: Manna Food Bank, 3030 North E. St., Pensacola, FL, 850-432-2053; Catholic Charities, 11 First St. SE, 850-244-2825, Fort Walton Beach, FL, ext. 1053; Weekend Food Program, 8668 Navarre Pkwy., Suite 225, Navarre, FL, 229-938-1821; Bay Area Food Bank, 105 Estes Place Unit B101, Panama City Beach, FL, (850) 249-5439 and Christian Service Center, 317 Dolphin Ave., Gulf Shores, AL, 251-968-5256.

Whether you want to explore the beach, the forests, paddle down rivers, shop boutiques or luxuriate in spas; there's a way for every one to relax in Navarre Beach, Florida's Most Relaxing Place.



Bands on the Blackwater

Friday April 13, 7 pm – 9pm

Friday April 20, 7 pm – 9pm

Friday April 27, 7 pm – 9pm

Spring Festival of Flowers

Friday, Saturday & Sunday, April 6-8, 2018 9am



Sand Dollar Saturday & Local Marketplace

Saturday March 3, 2018, 9am

30th Annual Riverwalk Arts Festival

Saturday & Sunday, March 3 – 4, 10am – 5pm

Navarre Beach

FLORIDA'S MOST RELAXING PLACE.

Please visit www.getrelaxing.com for more information on events and accommodations. Contact us at 850-981-8900.

WE LOVE OUR SNOWBIRDS!

Wind Creek Atmore is your place for food, fun and entertainment. We've got over 1,700 hot games, four delicious restaurants, an eight-screen movie theater, a world-class spa, and so much more — all just a short drive away. Plus, our RV Park offers a whole new way to stay and play! So, enjoy some FREE Play on us and Find Your Winning Moment!



MONDAYS, MARCH 5TH — APRIL 30TH
12PM - 3PM
WIN A SHARE OF OVER
\$3,500 CASH AND FREE PLAY EACH DAY

Earn ten base-points from 7am - 2pm and enjoy a FREE lunch at TASTE Buffet.



WEDNESDAYS • 6pm - 8pm
WIN UP TO
\$500 FREE PLAY
OR \$500 CASH!



Tuesdays, Wednesdays
and Thursdays
12pm - 1pm

Win a FREE Play Prize
and \$15 Food Credit!

MONDAY, MARCH 5TH — WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7TH
\$10 FREE PLAY
CODE: SNOWBDFP1

MONDAY, MARCH 12TH — WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14TH
\$10 FREE PLAY
CODE: SNOWBDFP2

MONDAY, MARCH 19TH — WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21ST
\$10 FREE PLAY
CODE: SNOWBDFP3

MONDAY, MARCH 26TH — WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28TH
\$10 FREE PLAY
CODE: SNOWBDFP4



FIND YOUR WINNING MOMENT.®

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