

A Trip to be Remembered
St. George Island
On Florida's Forgotten Coast**
May 20-23, 2024 4 Days / 3 Nights

In 2023, Florida had the distinct honor of having TWO beaches on Dr. Beach's Top 10 List. We visited Caladesi earlier in 2023, but had to save the #1 beach for 2024. That beach is within the St. George Island State Park at the eastern side of St. George Island, in the crook of the panhandle.

For over three decades, Dr. Stephen Leatherman ("Dr. Beach") has reviewed, evaluated and rated beaches and coastal areas throughout the world. In addition to his annual ranking of America's Best Beaches, he works tirelessly to increase awareness about the dangers of rip currents and to promote smoking free beaches. You can find him at drbeach.org if you are not already familiar with him.

St. George Island has resisted commercial development fiercely and as a result, there is only one beachfront hotel on the island....and it is only two stories tall. It was built in 1979 and has withstood a category 5 hurricane—Michael-- in 2018. This is most likely due to its construction of concrete block. We previewed the Buccaneer Inn over the summer as it is under new ownership, being upgraded and renovated in stages. We were treated well and enjoyed our short stay as we scouted around the island, but if you are not happy in lodgings that are not up to Hyatt or Hilton standards, this is not the trip for you. It reminded me of the Florida motels that were ever present along the roads to Florida in my youth – back in the early 1960s. It was clean and well kept, but there is nothing at the Buccaneer Inn to compete with the star of your trip – the Gulf waters and the beach the hotel sits on. Our group room rate of \$150 per night is an absolute bargain for a beachfront property.

Monday

On our way, we will stop at **Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park** for lunch and a tour of the beautiful Wakulla Springs. Inside the park sits one of the world's largest and deepest freshwater springs, rimmed by an ancient cypress swamp. The primeval quality of the park's swamps and wildlife are evident on the guided boat tours. After all, this is where *Tarzan's Secret Treasure* (1941) and *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954) were filmed. You can swim in the 70 degree sapphire waters, but so do manatee and alligators. After our lunch and boat tour of the springs, we will leave the state park and plan to arrive at the Buccaneer Inn in time for our 4pm check-in. <https://www.floridastateparks.org/WakullaSprings>

Once you have checked in, you are free to explore the beach or have dinner at one of the nearby restaurants. Everything is within walking distance.

Then at 7:30, we'll board to bus for the short 10 minute ride into Apalachicola to enjoy the Ghost Tour which starts at 8pm. The mysterious, theatrical, and fun ghost tour will take place in the shadows of several downtown buildings. We will **not** visit any cemeteries during the tour. The tour duration is 1 ½ hours. <https://www.apalachghosttour.com/>

Restaurants near our hotel:

Bayside Coffee Company: Coffee and Espresso, gifts and gear. <https://coffeebythebay.com/> open 7:00 am-12:30pm.

The Beach Pit: Texas style BBQ, seafood and breakfast; open 8am – 9pm ; <https://www.thebeachpit.com/>

BJ Pizza and Subs: pizza, subs, and ice cream; <https://www.sqipizza.com/> open 11am-10pm

Blue Parrot Oceanfront Cafe: seafood and tropical drinks; <https://www.blueparrotsgi.com/> open 11am-9pm; We really enjoyed our meal at the Blue Parrot, but it is a very popular place. You'll likely have a wait.

Tuesday May 21

The only drawback we found at the Buccaneer Inn was that they have no food service. None. As in no breakfast. Luckily, the Bayside Coffee Company and The Beach Pit are both within a 4 minute stroll of the hotel. (Frankly, when we have to pick between breakfast and the beach.....the beach is always going to win!) There is coffee in your room, which is an absolute requirement in our opinion. Toss some bagels & cream cheese in your luggage and you're all set!

St. George Lighthouse – about a 3 minute stroll from the Buccaneer Inn

The Cape St. George Lighthouse has been restored four times since first erected in 1833. The first light house suffered a storm but was restored in 1848. The second light house fell during a hurricane in 1851. It was completed in 1852 using materials from its predecessor but positioned further inland from the water's edge. For 153 years the Cape St. George Lighthouse valiantly served mariners well, but beach erosion ultimately caused its collapse on Oct 21, 2005. Government funding, contractors, and local volunteers took pieces of the Lighthouse and salvaged it by moving it to a storage site on the mainland. The St. George Lighthouse association acquired the 1852 plans from the National Archives and led the effort to reconstruct the lighthouse on St. George Island. More than 22,000 original bricks were used in the rebuilding effort. Cape St. George Lighthouse was successfully rebuilt and opened to the public on December 1, 2008.

We will tour **The CSG Lighthouse in the morning**. You have the opportunity to climb the 92 stairs to view some magnificent landscaping. Climbing the stairs has a \$3 fee, but the museum is free to all. The museum can only accommodate 25 guests at a time, so we will work out a staggered arrival. For those who have chosen to climb the 92 stairs this event will immediately follow the museum tour. Only 12 guests at once can be on the stairs. There is a generous 10% discount in the gift shop for everyone.

Once you've taken in the lighthouse, you'll want to explore the town area which is very compact, but has several treats in store for you. There is the SGI Gargoyle at 103 W. Gorrie Dr. Look him up and take a menacing selfie. The Art of Glass is a great activity spot if we encounter a bit of rain during our trip. Other shops in town - Sometimes Its Hotter spice store, various clothing boutiques, beach shops & convenience stores, Sugar Kingdom – the largest candy store we've ever seen...and a little bit more. Again, the star here is the beach.

St. George State Park

We will take our bus to the St. George State Park to spend the afternoon on the beach...the **# 1 beach in the US**. We have reserved the Sugar Hill Pavillion and later in the day, we'll have a catered dinner. If you have decided to take one of the optional boat trips, we promise to let you finish your dinner before we take you to your sunset cruise. There is no beach gear available to rent. Please bring your gear to the bus at departure time. The facilities include restrooms, showers and oh yeah – the beach pictured below. We'll head back to the hotel after sunset, allowing some time to swimor sit on the beach by moonlight.

The very first time I was at St. George Island, the shelling was what I would call magnificent. Here is a photo of some of the shells that I brought home from that trip.

Optional Sunset/Dolphin Cruises:

On Tuesday and/or Wednesday, you'll have the option of taking a scenic sunset boat tour around the Apalachicola Bay area. When we visited the island, we stopped at Journeys of SGI. Since St. George Island

does not encourage large commercial enterprises, all of the touring/fishing boats hold seven (7) people...the Captain and six (6) passengers. When we explained the group coming to the island and what we were hoping to find, he offered to round up 9 or 10 other boats so we could all be accommodated. But then he explained the cost and we also thought that not everyone would enjoy a boat ride. So, he is on 'standby' to take any seaworthy souls out to sea. There is a flat charge per boat of \$300. So, if you round up 5 friends, the cost will run \$50 per person plus whatever tip you may want to make. If you are an avid fisherman, you could also arrange for a fishing excursion. Journeys of SGI also offer kayak and paddleboard rentals. We'll help you make the connections and book your boat trip on either Tuesday or Wednesday evenings. On the days we are in St. George, the sun will set between 8:14 and 8:16pm. <https://www.sgislandjourneys.com/>

Wednesday May 22

In the morning, we will head to **Apalachicola National Estuarine Center**, less than 10 minutes away, for our 10am tour. There is a little bit of a walk on a raised boardwalk to reach the Center itself. The tour will take a little less than a 2 hours. Their staff really enjoys planning activities for us along the tour. There are birding spots and gorgeous boardwalks. This is a very rural area. Our main contact, Jeff Dutrow, describes the area as being like a seafood coastal town, which perfectly describes the towns of Carrabelle, Eastpoint & Alapachicola. They have a gorgeous nature center and we can enjoy the boardwalks independently. The nature center is stunning and their conservation efforts are remarkable. We will be divided into smaller groups to optimize our tours. <https://www.apalachicolareserve.com/>

The Estuarine System:

Apalachicola Bay is the lifeblood of a generations-old way of life along Florida's Forgotten Coast. The seafood culture here is unique and fragile. Apalachicola Bay is one of the most productive estuarine systems in the world featuring the perfect balance of environmental conditions necessary for feeding, breeding, and nurturing an abundant variety of seafood, including the world famous Apalachicola Bay oysters because of the way the rivers meld with the Gulf waters. Apalachicola Bay also produces an equally important shrimping industry. The shrimpers average more than a million pounds per year, nearly 20% of the state's shrimp supply. At one time, 90 percent of Florida's oyster production once came from the nearby Apalachicola Bay estuary. However, due to environmental conditions and oyster population depletion, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission suspended harvesting wild oysters. The suspension began in December 2020 and is scheduled to end in December 2025.

This is a tour we feel everyone will enjoy. After the tour, we will head into Apalachicola for lunch on your own and then a couple of short tours that together will take about 2 hours. If you've decided to take a boating excursion during the afternoon with Journeys of SGI, we will take you back to SGI for that.

Restaurants within the walking area of downtown Apalachicola

Apalachicola Chocolate Company: 75 Market St. chococoffeeco.com

Apalachicola Seafood Grill: 100 Market St; famous for the world's largest fish sandwich; [.Apalachicola Seafood Grill](#)

Bottoms Up: 76 Market St; beer, wine, and cocktails served onsite. [Bottom's Up | Apalachicola FL](#)

Cafe Con Leche: 234 Water St; cuban coffee, pastries, sandwiches [Cafe Con Leche Apalachicola, FL 32320 - Menu, 226 Reviews and 50 Photos - Restaurantji](#)

The Chowder House: 149 Commerce St; extensive seafood menu [The Chowder House](#)

The Franklin Cafe (located inside the Gibson Inn): 51 Avenue C; Serving southern style breakfast, lunch, or dinner on the porch. [The Franklin Café](#)

Half Shell Dockside: 301 Market St. a seafood bar and grill [Menu | Half Shell Dockside](#)

Hole in the Wall Raw Bar & Seafood; 23 Avenue D no website or menu available

Lou's Bar & Eatery, 76 Market St. <https://www.lousapalach.com/>

Old Time Soda Fountain: 93 Market St.; featuring classic soda fountain ice cream treats, gift shop items and dog treats.

[Old Time Soda Fountain](#)

Owl Cafe: 15 Ave D.; features a fresh seasonal menu including but not limited to southern classic southern chicken, salad, fried oysters, and fried flounder. [Historic Dining in Apalachicola, FL — Owl Café + The Tap Room](#)

The Owl Tap Room and Cafe: 75 Commerce; **The Owl Cafe:** features a fresh seasonal menu including but not limited to southern classic chicken, salad, fried oysters, and fried flounder. **The Tap Room;** oysters on the half shell, fried crab claws, local shrimp, duck fries, and much more.

[Owl Café + The Tap Room - Apalachicola, FL](#)

The Station Raw Bar: 53 Market St.; smoked fish dip, cheese curds, grilled crab cakes, fried pickles and much more https://www.thestationrawbar.com/files/ugd/4bc003_807c46e0da9a4aa1b2dab26527ffdb6b.pdf

Tamara's Cafe: 71 Market St; shrimp tacos, BBQ baked chicken, lamb gyros, mahi reuben [Tamara's on the go | Apalachicola FL](#)

Up the Creek Raw Bar: 317 Water Street; seafood [main | up-the-creek](#)

Up to No Good Tavern: 76 Market St; no menu or website available

The Raney House and The Chestnut Street Cemetery tours are scheduled to start at 2 pm. Like everything else in this area of Florida, nothing is designed for larger groups, so our group will divide up to make each tour more enjoyable for all. These sites are only a five minute walk apart.

The Raney House, a Greek revival house, was built in 1838. It is managed by the Apalachicola Historical Society. David and Harriet Raney had three sons who served in the confederate forces. David Raney Jr., was a marine officer aboard the C.S.S. Tennessee which was captured by Union naval forces. David escaped and made his way back to the Confederate lines. Members of the Raney family lived in the house until 1914. The city of Apalachicola purchased it in 1973 and established the museum. <https://aahs.wildapricot.org/Raney-House>

The Chestnut Street Cemetery is the oldest burying ground in Apalachicola and is the burial site of individuals connected with the development of the town. Approximately 540 marked graves are located in the cemetery as well as many unmarked graves. A variety of tombstones decorate the cemetery. There are at least 79 Confederate veterans and 7 Union veterans buried. <https://aahs.wildapricot.org/Chesnut-Street-Cemetery>

After the tours, you will be able to stay in Apalachicola for shopping & dinner, or return to the hotel (and beach) for the evening.

Thursday May 23

Unfortunately, it is time to say “Good-Bye” to the beautiful St. George Island. First, we have two more exciting stops to make in our Florida Capital, Tallahassee. We will depart the hotel around 10am so that you’ll have time for breakfast (or beach). By the time we get to Tally it will be about time for lunch. The spot we have selected is full of restaurant choices. After lunch, we’ll take a ten minute ride to The Goodwood Museum and Gardens where we will enjoy a 1 ½ hour tour.

Goodwood Museum and Gardens: A Memorial to the Enslaved. Goodwood Museum and Gardens, a former plantation, creates a memorial to all people enslaved on the property from approximately 1832 until 1865. A permanent outdoor memorial site has been chosen on a half-acre space adorned with several large live oaks and a bank of azaleas. The memorial will list the names of known enslaved persons, and will be a site for sober contemplation and remembrance. It will also be a site for meeting, teaching, community engagement, and healing. Goodwood’s mission statement states that it connects our community as a setting where we preserve and share our history, enjoy the arts, and celebrate significant events in our lives.

<https://www.goodwoodmuseum.org/>

From there we will head home to The Villages for a 5:30 pm arrival.

**As an aside, this section of Florida’s Gulf coast is referred to as “The Forgotten Coast”. However, its low key, non-commercial aspects are quite deliberate. From Mexico Beach in the Panhandle all the way to Clearwater, local ordinances prevent any significant commercial development, keeping the area in its more native condition. The Tourist Development Commissioners of Franklin County describe this as “the last remaining stretch of unspoiled, pristine Gulf Coast beaches that haven’t been overrun by high rises and strip malls”.

Lunch Restaurants at our first stop in Tallahassee

Chicken Salad Chick: 1410 Market St STE D3 ; Opens 11 am. Specializing in many types of salads, sandwiches, soups, sides, & cookies. <https://www.chickensaladchick.com/menu/restaurant-menu/>

Island Wing Company: 1370 Market St.; Chicken wings & tenders served alongside eclectic takes on burgers, tacos, mac n cheese & more. [Menus | Island Wing Company](#)

Jersey Mike’s Subs: 1355 Market St. Ste. A-6; New Jersey-based counter-serve sandwich chain serving jumbo subs filled with cold cuts and toppings. [Jersey Mike's Subs](#)

Jimmy John’s: 1450 Timberlane Rd; Counter-serve chain specializing in sub & club sandwiches, plus signature potato chips. [Jimmy John's Menu: Freaky Fresh & Freaky Fast Sandwiches](#)

Lofty Pursuits: 1355 Market St.; Old-fashioned soda fountain serving ice cream, milkshakes and candy; plus breakfast platters. [Lofty Pursuits](#).

Momo’s Pizza: 1410 Market St.; Pizza and an extensive beer menu. [.0016_0003_momos-market-menu-v3.pdf](#)

Sonny’s BBQ: 1460 Timberlane Rd; Long-standing BBQ restaurant chain specializing in meats smoked over oak, plus sides & salads [Appetizers | Menu](#)

The Fine Print

Because we have a number of new members, we want to make sure all of our members are aware of our cancellation policy for trips lasting more than one day. The businesses and services we will be utilizing during this trip require commitments and deposits from us; therefore we (your BBC Committee) must ensure that we will have the necessary funds to meet these commitments. Please read our cancellation policy and acknowledge on the reservation form that you agree to it.

Additionally, our contract with the hotel has a rather steep attrition clause in it. For that reason and the level of participation in the last multi-day trip, we have only contracted for 30 rooms. Should the demand for this trip exceed one bus, we will see if the hotel can add another block of 30 rooms to our contract, but we are not guaranteed the same daily room rate. We are drawing the lottery on a shorter time frame than normal to assess the interest in the trip so that if we need to add rooms, tours, etc., we will be successful in doing so.

[Cancellation Policy for BBC Trips Lasting Longer Than One Day](#)

- 1) **A cancellation for an overnight trip will be accepted if it is received by email to the Club Secretary (bbc32162@gmail.com) at least **four (4) days prior to the beginning date** of the trip **and** a replacement can be arranged.**
- 2) **The replacement will come from the waitlist first. If no waitlist exists for the multi-day trip, the cancelling club member can provide replacements (replacements do not have to be club members.) When a replacement is arranged and confirmed, a refund check will be sent to the cancelling club member.**
- 3) **If a cancellation is not able to be filled, either from the waitlist or substituted by the cancelling member, the trip transportation fee will be forfeited. Any money charged for additional activities paid in advance will be refunded.**
- 4) **Hotel deposits and cancellations are not the responsibility of the BBC and must be handled separately and **solely by the club member**. Do NOT cancel your hotel reservation until instructed by the BBC Secretary if you need to cancel your trip.**
- 5) **The cancellation will not be accepted if it is received within four (4) days of the beginning of the trip, whether or not a replacement can be found, and the cancelling club member will forfeit their entire trip transportation fee.**

Cost Per Person - \$199

Includes:

4-day bus transportation & driver tip

admission to Wakulla Springs State Park & boat tour of the springs

Does Not Include:

your hotel room (\$150 for two people per night, a one-time \$10 resort fee, plus 10.5% tax)

most of your meals

tip for your room attendant

OPTIONAL tour from SGI:

Sunset/Dolphin boat tour with Journeys of SGI

Ghost Tour admission & gratuity

Admission to St. George Island State Park & pavillion rental

Catered dinner on St. George Island State Park beach

guided tour of the Apalachicola Estuaries & gratuity

Guide tips for the Ramey House tour & Chestnut Street Cemetery tour

Admission to Goodwood Museum & Gardens

Accommodations for our driver

If you are traveling as a **single and are willing to share a hotel room, please indicate that on your reservation form and we will put you in touch with another single.**