

29+ Things To Do in Amelia Island That the Locals Want Kept Secret

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Amelia Island and its sister city Fernandina Beach boast **pristine beaches**, **historic charm**, fantastic **restaurants**, amazing **resorts** and **outdoor adventures** — all just a 5-6 hour drive from Atlanta — make it a quintessential Florida destination.

Here are some of our favorite things to do in Amelia Island so you can enjoy the island like us locals do.

THE COOLEST PLACES TO STAY IN AMELIA ISLAND



Courtesy of Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island

Best for Beach Families: [Seaside Amelia Inn](#) is a 46-room boutique hotel located directly on the beach, and features a hot breakfast, rooftop sundeck and outdoor pool.

Most Unique Downtown Accommodation: The Amelia Schoolhouse Inn was originally built as the first school on the island in 1886. You'll find 17 guest rooms, a pool, a courtyard with a putting green, and an upscale bar named "The Principal's Office."

Best Tried-and-True Hotel: The Courtyard Amelia Island is located 650 feet from Amelia Island Beach. it has a swimming pool and two restaurants on site.

Premium Lodging. The island is home to several deluxe resorts, including the Ritz-Carlton, the Villas of Amelia Island, and Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort.

Coziest Couples Rental: 1940 South is one-side of a stunning ocean front duplex. Also known as the "Yellow" side due to the fabulous bright yellow barn doors located on the second floor in the spacious living area.

Perfect for Your Larger Gathering: Collapsing glass doors along the back side of the home open to the pool and summer kitchen – everyone's favorite place to gather.

BEAUTIFUL BEACHES & OUTDOOR ADVENTURE



SAMPLE THE MANY PUBLIC BEACHES

Amelia has **40+ public beach access points**, making it easy to enjoy the waterfront no matter where on the island you're staying.

Quite a few of the beaches here **allow dogs**, too! Just make sure you keep them on their leash.

Fernandina's **Main Beach Park** is where all the action is. You'll find locals and visitors alike enjoying the picnic tables, grills, gazebos, volleyball courts, children's playground, restaurants, mini-golf, an outdoor skate park, public restrooms, and showers.

Of course, the main draw is the **beach!** There are four lifeguard stations at the beach here, and they're manned everyday from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Read More: [25+ BEAUTIFUL DOG FRIENDLY BEACHES IN FLORIDA FOR FIDO'S NEXT VISIT](#)

ENJOY A BEACH WITH A RICH HISTORY

American Beach was founded by African American millionaire Abraham Lincoln Lewis in response to segregation laws in the 1930s that kept many African Americans from enjoying many public amenities — like beaches.

Today, American Beach is a pristine beach that is the first stop on **Florida's Black Heritage Trail**.

GO HORSEBACK RIDING ON THE BEACH

Speaking of beaches, how about a romantic getaway with a **horseback ride** and ocean views?

Make date night unforgettable by booking a ride with [Happy Trails Walking Horses](#) or **Amelia Island Horseback Riding**. Enjoy daily rides or sunrise and sunset rides along some of the 13 miles of shoreline here.

CHECK OUT THE STATE PARKS

For a relatively small island, Amelia is packed with some amazing **Florida State Parks**.

We recommend [Fort Clinch](#), [Big Talbot Island](#), [Little Talbot Island](#), and [Amelia Island State Park](#).

These state parks offer a variety of ways to enjoy the island's natural beauty. You'll find lush forests, **beach access**, **hiking and biking trails**, **fishing**, camping, and plenty of chances to spot **native wildlife**.

BIKE THE ISLAND TRAILS

If you love bike riding, you'll love the **miles of bike trails** that cover the island.

Renting a bike is easy, and we recommend having a camera at the ready — you'll want to capture the amazing views along the trails!

Flying into Jacksonville FL? You're going to need a car. Great rates and comparisons on all major brands, including Enterprise and Hertz make Discover Cars our favorite travel tool. [Click here to compare rental car prices.](#)

EXPLORE BY KAYAK, CANOE, HYDRO-BIKE OR SUP

Whether guided or unguided, the many waterways that encompass this barrier island are ideal for **kayaks, canoes, and SUP exploration**. Amelia Island is home to plenty of rental options for those who want to take in the natural beauty of the area by water.

Have a group? Consider a **guided tour in a war canoe** — which is an extra long, stable, fast-movie canoe. You can all explore together during a half-day, all-day, or overnight trip.

Want something a little on the sillier side? How about **renting a hydro-bike** from Amelia River Cycle! It's an adventure the whole family will enjoy.

PLAY GOLF

Amelia Island is home to some of the **most popular golf courses** in the southeast.

Here you'll find the Fernandina Beach Golf Club, the Amelia Island Golf and Country Club, the Golf Club of North Hampton, the Golf Club of Amelia Island, and so many more!

TAKE A RIVER CRUISE

Amelia River Cruises & Charters provides narrated, historic and wildlife sightseeing tours with views of dolphins, manatees, sea otters, alligators, and the wild horses of Cumberland Island National Seashore.

The tours are offered during the day and at sunset. In the summer, they offer educational **shrimping eco-tours** that the whole family will love.

Read More: [DISCOVER THE CHERISHED SECRETS OF REMOTE CUMBERLAND ISLAND GA](#)

ENJOY A BOAT TOUR

One of the best things you can do to take in all the beauty of the island while learning more about it at the same time, is to take one of **Amelia Island's boat tours**.

- [Riptide Amelia Island](#) offers private and group kayak tours, CraigCat tours (CraigCats are small, powered catamarans), and boat tours.
- [Amelia Island Charters](#) offers family fishing trips and private wildlife nature tours.
- [On the Water Adventures](#) takes you on private guided nature tours through the creeks and rivers of Amelia and Cumberland Island.
- [Amelia Island Adventures](#) offers many different guided kayak tours, and boat tours.

SPOT SOME WILDLIFE

Amelia Island is an ecotourist's dream because of its pristine landscapes and abundance of **Florida wildlife**.

A **walk along any trail or beach** is full of opportunities to see sea turtles, dolphins, cranes, alligators, crabs, rabbits, deer and more.

Consider taking part in the [Fort Clinch Nature Walk](#) held every Saturday at **Fort Clinch State Park**, weather permitting. The guided nature walk is free with park admission (\$5 per vehicle).

STAY FIT AT EGANS CREEK GREENWAY PARK

The [Egans Creek Greenway](#) is located on the northern end of the island, and consists of over 300 acres of protected land along Egans Creek. It's perfect for **hiking, biking, birding, and photography**.

And for those who want to do some working out too, check out the **new fitness station** along the greenway!

SEA TURTLE WATCHING

Watching a **nest excavation** is a great way to get safely closer to sea turtles.

Visitors are allowed to observe [Amelia Island Sea Turtle Watch](#) volunteers conduct nest excavations — which is basically an inventory of all the remaining nest contents after the hatchlings have crawled out to sea.

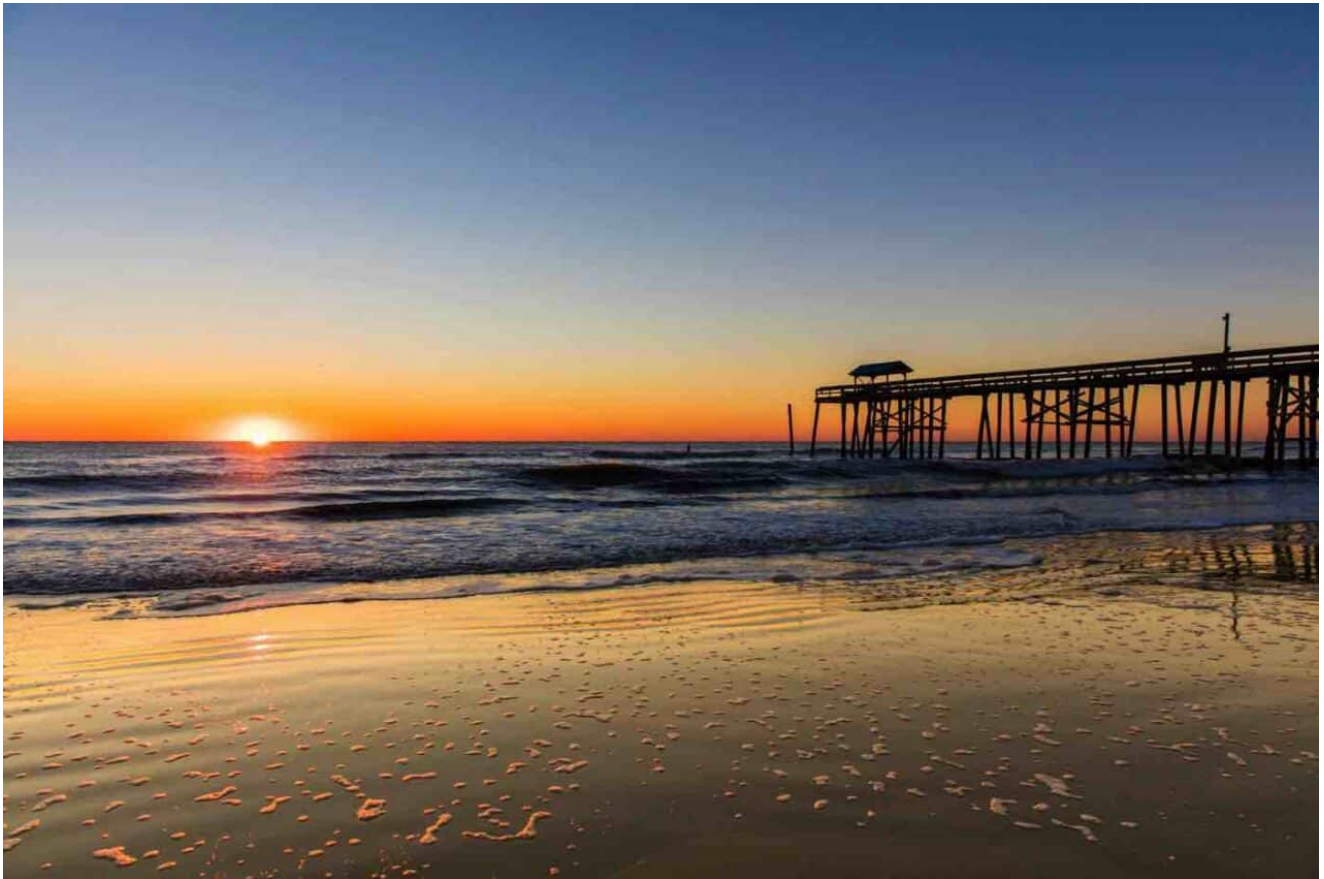
Some things you may witness include unhatched eggs, empty egg shells, and sometimes — live hatchlings! Excavations usually begin in early- to mid-July and continue until all nests have hatched.

BIRD WATCHING

If you're into **bird watching**, you'll want to keep your binoculars and camera handy in Amelia Island's parks and beaches. You'll have the chance to see a variety of species when visiting Amelia Island, including pelicans, skimmers, plovers and pipers.

Amelia Island State Park, Fort Clinch State Park, and the Egans Creek Greenway are popular birding destinations.

PLACES THE KIDS WILL LOVE



PIRATE PLAYGROUND

Voted the island's best playground on Trip Advisor, [Pirate Playground](#) at North Beach Park is accessible to children of all abilities.

Young ones will love the **unique play structures** that also incorporate history, art and music into the experience. There are benches for parents, and restrooms close by.

MINI GOLF

Take your pick from a selection of **mini golf sites**, including [Island Falls Adventure Golf](#), where we've been going for the past 10 years. After a long day on the beach, it's a classic way to unwind after dinner!

They also offer soft drinks, slushies, candy, ice cream and light snacks — so it's pretty much a kid's dream outing.

HISTORIC REENACTMENTS AT FORT CLINCH

A state park with beautiful natural scenery, [Fort Clinch](#) is perhaps best known for its **historic interpretation performances** that take visitors back to Amelia Island during the Civil War.

Visit the fort the first weekend of the month to see a whole garrison of soldiers who will teach you about fort living, including **cannon firing** and other battlefield skills at one of Amelia Island's coolest historic sites.

FISH OFF THE PIER AT AMELIA ISLAND STATE PARK

The mile-long [George Crady Bridge Fishing Pier](#) at Amelia Island State Park is dotted with devoted anglers every day of the week, but especially on weekends.

[On the Line Bait and Tackle shop](#) is open for visitors using their walk-up window, offering a great variety of fishing bait and tackle supplies, snacks and refreshments.

TAKE THE FERRY FROM LITTLE TALBOT TO JACKSONVILLE

If you've got little ones who love "things that go," they'll be charmed by the [St. Johns River Ferry](#).

The St. Johns River Ferry is a car and passenger ferry that connects the north and south ends of Florida State Road A1A in Duval County, linking Mayport Village and Fort George Island via a pleasant sail across the St. Johns River. The ferry departs every half hour.

Continue south to Jacksonville for a day trip to the city's best family-friendly attractions.

Read More: [37 EXCITING THINGS TO DO IN JACKSONVILLE FL YOU'LL LOVE](#)

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN FERNANDINA BEACH



SHOPPING AND STORYTIME AT THE BOOK LOFT

Located in **historic downtown Fernandina**, [The Book Loft](#) is sure to charm readers of all ages.

The Book Loft boasts a multi-genre selection of local and national favorites, plus **children's story hours** and **author signings**.

In the loft upstairs, you can find older hardback fiction at half-price, and their resident ghost! (Her name is Katherine, by the way.)

IMBIBE IN A NIGHTCAP AT THE PALACE SALOON

Grab a drink at [The Palace Saloon](#), also known as **Florida's oldest bar!**

There is a lot of history in this place, and it's worth stopping in for a pint or a nightcap. Read up on its history before you go, so you can really appreciate all the ghosts you're sure to be sharing a drink with.

SELFIE AT FERNANDINA HARBOR

Enjoy the **views of the Amelia River** along South Front Street – and take a picture while you're there. Fernandina Harbor is the perfect place to snap a sunset shot.

After a walk admiring the views, make sure to try out the [Salty Pelican](#) for dinner.

GET A HISTORY LESSON THE THE AMELIA ISLAND MUSEUM

From Native Americans to pirates to the Spanish, Amelia Island has a fascinating history of residents and rulers, and you'll learn all about it from the docents of the [Amelia Island Museum of History](#), located in a renovated community jailhouse.

The museum is the first spoken history museum in Florida, and offers **Ghost Tours** and **Pub Crawls**, in addition to their **walking tours** and **museum tours**.

ADMIRE THE HISTORIC HOMES

For even more history and local charm, don't miss the Museum of History's annual [Holiday Home Tour](#), which showcases downtown's finest **Victorian homes**, all professionally decked out for the season.

Held the first weekend in December, the Holiday Home Tour is an annual tradition, with proceeds benefiting the Amelia Island Museum of History.

PATRONIZE THE LOCAL BUSINESSES

Downtown Fernandina is the perfect place to spend a few hours **shopping at local boutiques** for the perfect date night outfit, charming antiques, or nautical-inspired home decor.

There are lots of local businesses and shops, and you're sure to find something that you absolutely must have.

VISIT AN ART GALLERY

There are several **art galleries** located downtown that are definitely worth a visit.

- [2nd Story Gallery and Studios](#) features artwork by local artists, and you'll find work in oils, acrylics, and photography on display.
- [Art on Centre](#) features works from living American artists using various mediums in a contemporary theme.
- [Shady Ladies Art](#) is a new art studio and gallery downtown where you can enjoy great art and conversation.

ENJOY THE LOCAL FARMERS MARKET

We love to stop by the Saturday morning [Fernandina Beach Market Place](#) to stock up on snacks and treats before heading to the beach. Farmers, growers, and entrepreneurial individuals sell locally grown and produced goods here. The **farmers' market** is open

EVERY Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., year round, rain or shine.

The [Fernandina Beach Arts Market](#) is the newest addition to the scene — and is located adjacent to the Farmer’s Market. Held on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month, this market features **arts and crafts**, and is a great place to pick up a souvenir to remember your trip.

HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS



Courtesy of Amelia Island

ISLE OF EIGHT FLAGS SHRIMP FESTIVAL

Who knew you could throw such a big party in honor of such a little sea critter?

The [Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival](#) features a pirate costume contest, a beauty pageant, a parade, a Shrimp run, exhibitors, arts and crafts, a kid zone, and more. Don’t miss the “**Decorated Shrimp Boat**” contest!

SHRIMP DROP

No need to see the ball drop to welcome the New Year — Amelia Island has you covered with their very own maritime-themed **Shrimp Drop**!

Enjoy live music, activities for the kids, and a **fireworks show** before watching a sparkling shrimp fall to welcome the new year!

DICKENS ON CENTRE

Enjoy **Christmas Victorian-style** at [Dickens on Centre!](#)

Held on a December weekend, this special event transforms historic downtown Fernandina into an English village, complete with costumed carolers. This **free event** features themed entertainment and performances, visits from Saint Nick, and a variety of vendors selling seasonal gifts.

There's also a **Holiday Cookie Tour** too! The cookie tour takes you through the historic bed and breakfasts in the area, and you'll get to see their holiday decorations while enjoying a cookie at each stop.

WILD AMELIA NATURE FESTIVAL

As an island teeming with fascinating ecology, you won't want to miss the [Wild Amelia Nature Festival](#) that takes place each May.

The festival features **wildlife exhibits**, conservation exhibits, **activities for the kids**, a silent auction, and **live music**.

Take guided eco-tours and a narrated river cruise, peruse the eco-expo, and top it all off with a rehabilitated sea turtle release!

AMELIA ISLAND JAZZ FESTIVAL

There's no better way to celebrate Jazz music than with a visit to the [Amelia Island Jazz Festival](#). The festival features a week of performances by acts both large and small in venues throughout the community.

Held in October each year, the festival presents **world-class jazz** in many styles — including swing, bebop, Dixieland, big band, Latin, and contemporary.

WHERE TO EAT



WE SCREAM FOR THIS ICE CREAM

We can't resist a stop at [DeNucci's](#) for some **soft serve ice cream** every time we visit the island. Their brightly colored building has a walk-up window, and little **playground** that the kids will love.

They have indoor and outdoor seating, and they serve Nathan's hot dogs, sandwiches, and wraps too.

SNAG A PICNIC TABLE AT TASTY'S

If you're looking for some of the **best burgers and shakes in town**, you've got to make a stop at [Tasty's](#) — a gas station turned burger joint, located downtown.

Tasty's is all about the burgers and fries, but they also have a couple of local seafood options too! With plenty of outdoor seating, Tasty's is a great place to stop after a bike ride back from Main Beach or Fort Clinch.

PERK UP AT AMELIA ISLAND COFFEE

Looking for a caffeine boost? Try [Amelia Island Coffee](#) where they have locally roasted coffee, organic tea, pastries, and breakfast and lunch items.

Located in the heart of downtown Fernandina on Centre Street, AIC is the place to go for free, high-speed internet and friendly conversation.

LUNCH LIKE A LOCAL

Savoring lunch on [Cafe Karibo's](#) terrace is a must for any visit to Amelia Island.

A **large garden patio** shaded by huge oak trees makes for a relaxed setting for you to enjoy their creative, handmade fare. They serve salads and sandwiches for lunch, and have some great seafood options for dinner.

Consider stopping by for **Sunday brunch** here to try their Crabby Eggs Benedict, or Kung Pao Shrimp Soft Tacos. We love their fresh, bright menu and local brews!

SHOP AND SAVOR

Tucked inside an inconspicuous health food store — **Nassau Health Foods** — is a little local gem, [Amelia Fresh Cafe](#). Preparing natural, organic daily specials, you can tuck into a bounty of nutritious dishes that taste as good as they look.

They offer breakfast and lunch, and have a bakery and smoothies, too. **Vegan and gluten-free options** are available here.

AMELIA ISLAND FAQ

What is Amelia Island best known for?

Amelia Island is best known for its pristine beaches, clean water, family friendly parks, and wildlife, as well as its resort hotels, spas, golf courses, and restaurants.

Does Amelia Island have a downtown?

Historic downtown Fernandina Beach is the perfect place to visit. Sometimes referred to as a “tropical Mayberry,” the downtown area is full of art galleries, museums, shops and restaurants.

What is the difference between Amelia Island and Fernandina Beach?

Fernandina Beach is the name of the city on Amelia Island, and Amelia Island is the name of the whole island. Sometimes people use them interchangeably, but sometimes people use “Fernandina Beach” to describe the downtown area.

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