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The Best Things to Do on a Girls' Trip to 30A, Florida

Every year, we plan a girls' trip to a different destination in the US. Over the years, we have visited some incredible places like Savannah, Charleston, Maui, Cape Cod, Dallas, Big Sur, Montana, New Orleans, Chicago, New York, and the Oregon Coast. Each destination has been amazing, but this year's trip to 30A, Florida, just might be my favorite!

30A is a scenic 24-mile stretch of coastal highway along Florida's beautiful Emerald Coast. It winds through some of the most charming beach towns on the Gulf, and while 30A is technically the name of the highway, the entire area is affectionately known as "30A."

With sugar-white sandy beaches, warm sunshine, delicious restaurants, adorable coastal towns, and the cutest beach house accommodation, it has all the ingredients for the perfect girls' weekend!

The Best Place to Stay at 30A, Florida

One of the reasons we loved this trip so much was that we found the perfect home base! We stayed at Sugar+Salt 30A, a gorgeous vacation rental located inside a gated community, just minutes from the charming beach towns of Alys Beach and Rosemary Beach.

The home comfortably sleeps up to 12 guests, so you can invite all your besties and split the cost.

Thought has been put into every detail, from the stylish coastal decor and comfortable beds to the fluffy towels, well-stocked kitchen, game cupboard, and high-quality toiletries. There's even an elevator, so you don't have to worry about hauling your luggage up the stairs!

One of our favorite features was the outdoor fire pit. It was perfect for roasting s'mores in the evenings or just relaxing and chatting around the fire at the end of the day.

The community pool is just a few hundred yards from the backyard, and we loved spending an afternoon lounging poolside. The pool is nestled in the pines, and it's hard to believe the beach is only a few minutes away!

Another perk I loved, was that the home comes with eight beach cruisers for guests to use. Biking is one of the best ways to explore the charming beach towns along 30A, and we ended

up using the bikes way more than our car.

Guests also have deeded access to the private Seacrest Beach, just a few minutes away by bike. It is so convenient that the rental includes all the beach essentials you'll need, including chairs, umbrellas, beach towels, and sand toys.

Honestly, Sugar+Salt 30A checks all the boxes! Between the incredible location, beautiful accommodations, and thoughtful amenities, it was the perfect home base for our girls' getaway.

The Best Places to Go and Things to Do Around 30A, Florida

Rosemary Beach

Rosemary Beach feels like a little slice of Europe on Florida's beautiful Emerald Coast. The town is known for its European colonial-style architecture, with chigh-gabled roofs, shuttered windows, and pastel-colored stucco buildings.

You'll also find a picturesque town square, coastal boardwalk, sidewalk cafes, glowing gas lanterns, and cobblestone streets that make you feel like you've been transported straight to the French Riviera.

While the beach itself is private and reserved exclusively for property owners and registered guests, the community of Rosemary Beach still has plenty to offer.

Barrett Square is a pedestrian-only town square located in the heart of Rosemary Beach. It's surrounded by chic boutiques, charming sidewalk cafes, and what might be the cutest little post office I've ever seen!

If you're visiting on the weekend, don't miss the 30A Farmer's Market, held in Barrett Square every Sunday from 9 am until 1 pm.

You'll also find The Pearl Hotel, an iconic luxury boutique hotel overlooking the square. It's home to Havana Beach Bar & Grill, a popular rooftop restaurant that's worth checking out.

Rosemary Beach is the perfect place to window shop and pick up some fun souvenirs. We have a tradition of buying matching sweatshirts on every girls' trip, and we found that Seacrest Beach Trading Company had the best prices.

Another hidden gem we stumbled upon and loved was Hidden Lantern Bookstore, a cozy independent bookshop that's perfect for picking up a new beach read.

Alys Beach

Alys Beach has a distinct Mediterranean feel with whitewashed buildings, a sophisticated aesthetic, and breezy al fresco dining. It's often compared to a Greek Island, and I can see why!

Like Rosemary Beach, beach access is also private here, but the town itself is absolutely worth exploring. We loved wandering the beautiful streets, admiring the stunning luxury beach homes, and popping into the adorable cafes and boutiques.

One of our favorite discoveries was the Alys Beach Nature Trail, a scenic path that winds through a 20-acre nature preserve. The trail is about 0.75 miles long and features a raised boardwalk that takes you right over the wetlands. It's open to walkers, joggers, and bikers, and we loved riding through the dense forest of slash pines and cypress trees. The trail is easy to access from town, but it feels like it's a world away!

Seaside

My husband and I watched *The Truman Show* on our first date, and I remember being completely captivated by the idyllic seaside town of Seahaven Island where Truman Burbank lived. Little did I know that the fictional town was inspired by the real-life beach town of Seaside, Florida. And let me tell you, it's every bit as charming in person as it looks in the movie!

The Truman Show put this once-sleepy beachfront town on the map, attracting visitors from around the world. Despite the fame, Seaside has managed to maintain its small-town charm with quaint mom-and-pop shops, a cozy bookstore, and rows of colorful beach cottages.

Here are a few things you won't want to miss while visiting Seaside!

Visit the Iconic Post Office

Seaside has one of the cutest little post offices I've ever seen. It was featured in *The Truman Show*, and it would be fun to stop by and mail a postcard from one of the most postcard-worthy towns in America!

See Truman's House

You can also stop by the house where Truman Burbank lived in the movie. It's located at 31 Natchez Street, although the homeowners have kept the original movie address, number 36, displayed on the house.

Browse Modica Market

Modica Market was another filming location featured in the movie, and stepping inside feels like taking a trip back in time. This family-owned market has a charming little deli and sells everything from everyday essentials to gourmet foods and snacks.

Grab a Bite at Airstream Row

Airstream Row is a fun collection of vintage Airstream trailers that have been converted into gourmet food trucks. One of the most popular spots is The Meltdown, known for its grilled

cheese sandwiches and roasted tomato soup. It's one of my favorite comfort food combinations, and you can't go wrong with it!

Enjoy a Sweet Treat at Nigel's Bananas

If you're craving something sweet, head to Nigel's Bananas. We sampled the hand-dipped frozen bananas, ice cream bars, and key lime pie. Everything was delicious, but our favorite was the hand-dipped key lime pie topped with toasted coconut. So good!

Of course, we had to stop at the cute photo booth outside the shop. It made for a fun little souvenir to take home!

Wander the Charming Streets

One thing I didn't realize before visiting, is that Seaside is actually a privately owned, master-planned community. Rather than being an incorporated town, it operates under its own development and architectural guidelines, with very specific building codes that govern almost every detail of the town's appearance.

And I mean *every* detail! The guidelines dictate everything from the exact measurements of wood trim to the specific lumens used in exterior lighting. No two homes can be identical, picket fences are required, and every home must have a continuous, open porch facing the street.

There are even rules about paint colors. Homes closer to the Gulf must be painted in lighter shades, while homes farther inland should have darker colors. Pure white is reserved exclusively for civic buildings.

It is fascinating to walk along the streets and see how intentional every detail is in this picture-perfect town!

Spend Time at the Beach

The Beach at Seaside is privately owned, but visitors can enjoy beach access by renting a chair and umbrella through Cabana Man.

They also open the beach to the public at sunset, which I loved. It was fun to see everyone gather together at the end the day and watch the sun dip below the horizon.

Timpoochee Trail

The Timpoochee Trail is an 18-mile paved trail that runs alongside Scenic Highway 30A. We loved biking along this path and stopping at the cute towns and lookout points along the way.

The trail stretches from Inlet Beach to Dune Allen Beach and is shared by bikers, walkers, and joggers, so be courteous of others on the path.

Some of the highlights along the trail include Rosemary Beach, Alys Beach, Deer Lake State Park, Seaside, WaterColor, and Grayton Beach. The trail also passes by ice cream stands and cafes if you want to stop and enjoy a break along the way.

It's one of the best ways to explore 30A, and it's so nice that beach cruisers are included in your stay at Sugar+Salt 30A!

Beach Day

One thing that surprised us about 30A is that many of its beautiful, pristine beaches are privately owned, which can make finding public beach access a little tricky.

The history behind beach ownership in this area is somewhat complicated. Many beachfront properties were deeded by the federal government to private landowners in the early 1900s, and there has been an ongoing debate over where private property ends and public beach access begins.

Generally speaking, the wet sand along the shoreline is considered public, while the dry sand above the high-water line may be privately owned, with access restricted by individual property owners and HOAs.

Adding to the confusion, the popular beach communities of Rosemary Beach, Alys Beach, and Seaside are all owned by the same master-planning architectural firm. Since these neighborhoods are privately owned and not incorporated towns, the beach access points are also closed to the public.

All that to say, public beach access is somewhat limited along 30A, so it's worth planning ahead before heading out for a beach day.

Inlet Beach was the closest public beach to our stay at Sugar+Salt 30A. It's just a few minutes east of Rosemary Beach and boasts the powdery white sand and clear turquoise water that the Emerald Coast is famous for.

Guests staying at Sugar+Salt 30A also have deeded access to Seacrest Beach. Since this is a private beach, you can enjoy the wide stretch of sand without the crowds.

A few other public beaches and beach access points worth checking out along 30A include:

- Ed Walline Regional Beach
- Gulf Lakes Public Beach
- Santa Clara Regional Beach
- Grayton Beach State Park
- Miramar Regional Beach
- Blue Mountain Regional Beach
- Walton Dunes Beach
- Dune Allen Regional Beach

We thought it would be so fun to have a sunset bonfire on the beach during our girls' trip. However, beach bonfires require a permit, which typically costs between $50 and $100.

If you want to avoid the hassle, several local companies offer beach bonfire packages. One company that came highly recommended was 30A Blaze.

Eden Gardens State Park

Eden Gardens State Park is about a 15-minute drive from Rosemary Beach and makes for a fun little afternoon excursion away from the coast.

The main attraction is the historic Wesley House, a beautiful Antebellum-style mansion dating back to 1895. It was originally built by William Henry Wesley, the founder of the Wesley Lumber Company. The family raised their 9 children in this home until 1953.

After the family moved out, the home sat vacant for nearly a decade until it was purchased by Lois Maxon, a retired New York journalist, wealthy heiress, and passionate antique collector. Lois never married and had no children of her own, so before her passing in 1968, she generously donated the property to the State of Florida to preserve it for future generations.

Today, the beautifully restored home operates as a museum, showcasing Lois' personal collection of antiques and furnishings. We loved taking the guided tour and learning about the fascinating history of the home, its former residents, and the impressive antique collection. Our guide told us that her antique collection is worth millions of dollars today!

Guided tours run Thursday through Monday, on the hour from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. At the time of our visit, tickets were just $4 per person, and both cash and credit cards were accepted. There's also a separate $4 park entrance fee, which is paid in cash using the honor system. Check the Eden Gardens State Park website for updated visitor information.

Beyond the mansion, the park itself is absolutely beautiful. It is situated on the edge of the Tucker Bayou, where you can enjoy fishing, kayaking, or exploring the scenic walking trails. The grounds are dotted with magnificent 500-year-old live oak trees draped in Spanish moss. It reminded me so much of Savannah!

It was a fun spot to soak up a little history, enjoy the beautiful scenery, and experience a different side of Florida's Emerald Coast.

Conservation Park

Another fun and unique spot we discovered was Conservation Park, a sprawling 2,900-acre nature preserve. What initially drew us here were the elevated wooden boardwalks that wind through beautiful cypress swamps and wetlands. The landscape has an eerie kind of beauty, and you might even spot alligators lurking in the water below.

The park has over 24 miles of trails, and we underestimated just how big it is! I wish they offered bike rentals, but you can bring your own bike to explore the dirt trails, but keep in mind that bikes are not permitted on the wooden boardwalks.

If you're short on time and want to experience the most scenic part of the park, I recommend heading straight to the Cypress Pond Trail. It's a beautiful stretch of boardwalk and a great way to experience the unique cypress swamp scenery.

A Few More Things to Do Around 30A:

- **Santa Rosa Beach Water Activities:** If you're looking for a fun afternoon on the water, check out Santa Rosa Beach Rentals. You can rent jet skis, paddleboards, kayaks, and pontoon boats. They also offer fishing charters and parasailing.
- **Crab Island:** Crab Island is a famous shallow sandbar and popular boating destination in Destin. It has such a fun vibe, with floating restaurants, ice cream boats, and floating tiki bars. It's about an hour's drive from Rosemary Beach, but it's an iconic Florida Panhandle experience worth adding to your itinerary. This is the pontoon boat tour we were considering. It looked reasonably priced and had great reviews.
- **Ponce de Leon Springs State Park:** Florida is famous for its beautiful freshwater springs, and Ponce de Leon Springs State Park is one of the closest to 30A. It's about an hour's drive away, but it's worth the trip if you want to spend an afternoon swimming in the refreshing crystal-clear spring water.
- **Airboat Tour:** For a little adventure, head out on an airboat tour through the backwater bayous of the Choctawhatchee River. It's such a fun experience to spot alligators and other native wildlife while cruising through Florida's beautiful wetlands.

The Best Places to Eat Around 30A

Fonville Press

Fonville Press is an utterly adorable coastal cafe and market. The aesthetic decor and the picture-perfect pink umbrellas on the patio, are made for a girls' trip!

The food is delicious, with an extensive menu featuring brunch favorites, sandwiches, salads, flatbreads, and more. I ordered the Grain Bowl, which was loaded with fresh greens, quinoa, whipped feta, tomato preserves, and avocado, all topped with a perfectly fried egg. It was delicious!

We also tried the Turkey Bacon Club Sandwich and picked up a few goodies from the bakery.

They have a cute little market selling gourmet foods, baked goods, and other specialty treats. Their homemade cinnamon rolls were ginormous and looked divine!

Raw & Juicy

Raw & Juicy is an adorable farm-to-table cafe in Alys Beach and the perfect spot to grab brunch during a girls' weekend on 30A.

The story behind this little eatery is just as charming as the cafe itself. Raw & Juicy originally started out serving cold-pressed juices from a converted Airstream trailer and has since grown into a brick-and-mortar cafe. They pride themselves on using organic, locally sourced ingredients whenever possible, and everything is freshly prepared by hand.

The menu has expanded beyond cold-pressed juices and includes a delicious variety of breakfast and lunch options. You'll find everything from Sourdough French Toast and Breakfast Burritos to Maine Lobster Rolls, Grass-Fed Burgers, and more.

We ordered Acai Bowls, and they tasted just as good as they looked!

Amici 30A Italian Kitchen

I kept seeing recommendations for Amici 30A Italian Kitchen pop up when researching this trip, and it did not disappoint!

We loved the handcrafted pizzas and homemade pasta. We ordered the Gnocchi with Creamy Vodka Sauce and the Fettuccine with Lemon, Capers, and Brown Butter Sauce, and both dishes were absolutely delicious. Even the complimentary bread served with olive oil was divine!

The space felt chic and was the perfect setting for dinner with the girls. As a bonus, we visited during happy hour, and select pizzas and pasta dishes were half price!

Amigos 30A Mexican Kitchen

Amigos 30A Mexican Kitchen is part of the same hospitality group as Amici 30A Italian Kitchen and is conveniently located right next door.

The menu features all your Mexican favorites, including tacos, burritos, and rice bowls. We tried a few different dishes and it was all delicious, but the homemade chips and queso stole the show! I also heard their street corn is a must-try, so that's definitely on my list for next time.

Another bonus is their daily happy hour, which runs from 3–6 p.m. and features great deals on food and drinks.

A Few More of the Best Places to Eat Around 30A

- **Donut Hole:** A local favorite for delicious, freshly made donuts, along with an extensive menu of breakfast and lunch favorites.
- **Scratch Biscuit Kitchen:** If you love a good biscuit, this place is a must! They serve delicious, made-from-scratch biscuit sandwiches, and you have to try the Toffee Biscuit Pudding!
- **Pizza by the Sea:** This spot has some mixed reviews, but I love the idea of grabbing a pizza to-go and enjoying a casual picnic on the beach with friends.

- **Black Bear Bread Co.:** An adorable Parisian-inspired bakery and cafe serving freshly baked homemade pastries, artisan breads, and coffee.
- **The Perfect Pig:** Known for its comforting Southern homestyle dishes and mouthwatering barbecue. It's a great option when you're craving some good old-fashioned Southern cooking.

Final Thoughts:

We loved everything about our trip to 30A! We spent our days biking through charming beach towns, soaking up the sun on the beach, and eating brunch at outdoor cafes. We spent our evenings chatting on the cozy couches, playing games, and roasting s'mores around the fire pit.

Best Time to Visit 30A

We visited at the beginning of November and couldn't have asked for better weather. Daytime temperatures were in the upper-70s and we only experienced a few scattered rainshowers. The crowds were also noticeably thinner and vacation rental prices were lower this time of year.

The busiest times to visit 30A are during the summer months, spring break, and the holiday season. Hurricane season officially runs from June 1 through November 30, with September typically being the peak month for hurricane activity.

Getting to 30A

We flew into the Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP), which is about a 30-minute drive from Rosemary Beach. We loved the location and that it is a smaller airport, but flights are generally a little more expensive.

Another option is Destin Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS). It is about an hour from Rosemary Beach, but you can often find better deals on flights.

Getting Around 30A

We rented a car for this trip, which was convenient for exploring the area and visiting some of the attractions farther away from the beach towns. However, if you're planning to spend most of your time along 30A, you could easily get by without a car. Just take an Uber from the airport to your vacation rental and use the beach cruisers to explore the nearby towns, restaurants, and beaches. Biking really is one of the best ways to experience 30A!

I hope this guide helps you plan the perfect girls' getaway to 30A, I have no doubt you'll have an unforgettable trip!