
30A

The gem of the Florida Gulf Coast, County Highway 30A, is known for its natural wonders, beautiful beaches, eclectic group of communities, bohemian vibe, and artistic soul.



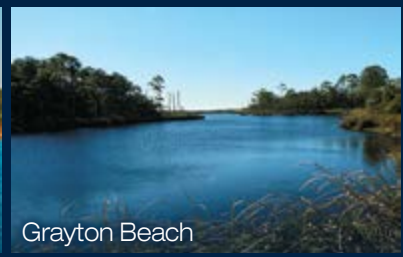
30A is one of the few places where humans and nature mesh together seamlessly. Art and food, hiking trails and wildlife, beaches and boardwalks all come together in these tucked-away communities. This is the kind of place where it's easy to approach someone to ask for directions or to take a photo for you and your family. A simple hello to a local is likely to make you a new friend and to spark a conversation. They'll spend time telling you where to get the best lunch or how to get to their favorite beach access. This twenty-eight-and-a-half-mile stretch of county road along the Gulf of Mexico is more than just pavement — it's a community filled with friendly people, abundant with nature, and rich with history.







30A



When you hear about great cities, you often hear something along the lines of the great art scene or fantastic music scene they possess. 30A has the music scene, the art scene, the fashion scene, the food scene, and even the beach scene. As a matter of fact, it's the place just to be seen! It is the host of the 30A Songwriters Festival, South Walton Fashion Week, and The Food and Wine Festival. It is the location of Artists' Square where artists live just above their shops and Airstream Ally where culinary treats are served from airstream food trucks. It is also home to award-winning beaches, protected forests, and rare, coastal dune lakes. It's easily said that 30A offers a bit of everything for everyone.

Communities

There are 13 distinct communities along 30A (from West to East): Dune Allen Beach, Santa Rosa Beach, Blue Mountain Beach, Grayton Beach, WaterColor, Seaside, Seagrove Beach, WaterSound Beach, Alys Beach, Seacrest Beach, Rosemary Beach, Inlet Beach, and Carillon Beach. Each one has its own style and a story to tell. We'll tell a few of them here and encourage you to discover the rest by taking your own trip to 30A.

Grayton Beach is over one hundred years old and one of the oldest 30A communities. The land was mostly wooded area owned by the government through the nineteenth century. In the early 1900s, the W.H. Butler family moved to Grayton Beach with the ambition of turning the area into a resort, but it was not without setbacks. In 1926 a large hurricane swept away many of the existing buildings. Still, the Butlers persevered and built up the area with new homes and businesses. By the 1930's Grayton Beach was attracting hundreds of visitors who came to dine, dance, play, or just relax.

Unlike the more metropolitan areas that neighbor 30A, it's very normal to walk instead of drive from place to place. Large sidewalks make 30A an accessible community, with bike and foot travel being the most common ways to get around. The area evokes the feel of a European village with small shops lining the streets. Most of the businesses are family-owned and offer unique products you can't find anywhere else. Artists, high-end fashion designers, and merchants of all sorts can be found selling one-of-a-kind goods. Wide sidewalks lined with beautiful magnolia trees encourage casual afternoon strolls through town with stops at any of the parks, restaurants, or stores along the way.

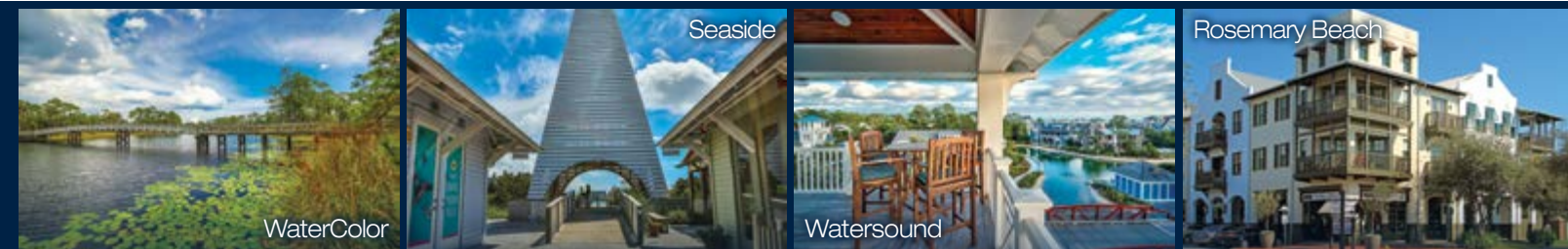


Not much has changed about Grayton Beach since then. Many of the original homes built by the Butlers are still standing, and the natural forests of the area still surround the perimeter of the community, plus the protected land of Grayton Beach State Park. The atmosphere is laid back, and as the local saying goes the town is full of “nice dogs and friendly folks.” It’s the place where you’re free to relax without a single worry while enjoying quirky shops, unique eateries, quaint bars with live music, and peaceful beaches.

Seaside was used as the backdrop for the hit movie *The Truman Show* (1998)—a comedy on life lived in a utopian society. The movie takes place in a dreamlike, beachfront town where everyone is happy-go-lucky, and in this case Hollywood didn’t stray far from reality. Seaside is a perfected beach community with pastel beach cottages and white picket fences lining the neighborhood streets. The community was developed in 1981, seventeen years prior to its movie debut. It was laid out primarily

into the community there are wide bike paths and nature trails. Camp Watercolor features plenty of open space and a playground for children.

It didn’t take long for WaterColor to get noticed across the country, and even overseas. The area has won multiple awards such as one of the “Top 10 Beach Resorts in the World” by Forbes magazine and one of the “World’s Best” family destinations by Travel & Leisure magazine. The community keeps family at the heart of everything. Children love to ride their bikes through town with stops at The Candy Bar serving novelty candies and hand-dipped ice cream. At the Boathouse Paddle Club kids and teens enjoy taking lessons on paddle boarding with friendly instructors. Children’s retailers such as Barefoot Princess and WaterBugs ensure that all kids leave with a keepsake to remember the vacation by. WaterColor is where you go to make memories that your children will remember for years to come.



by Robert Davis who envisioned a simple, idyllic town that would bring families together. He inherited the deed to the land from his grandfather, whom he had many fond memories of exploring the Seaside beaches with as a child.

The town is comprised of New Urbanism architecture, a renewed interpretation of old-world American architecture. The most iconic architectural features of Seaside are the nine beach pavilions. Each one has a unique design and represents some feature of Seaside’s history.

West Ruskin Street Beach Pavilion is pictured on the previous spread, and the **Coleman Pavilion** is pictured in the image above. The pavilions mark the pathways to the public beach accesses and have become local landmarks.

These public beach access points offer amenities like bathrooms, showers, parking, and boardwalks. It is rare that you will ever be more than five minutes away from the beach when you stay in Seaside. It is a very walkable community, and foot travel or bicycle is the most common way to get around. Wide sidewalks lined with beautiful magnolia trees encourage casual afternoon strolls through town with stops at any of the parks, restaurants, or stores along the way.

WaterColor is a master planned community, of which 50% is dedicated to open space and nature preservation areas. The community is not as old as the ones previously mentioned, but it still has its own story to tell. The community was developed in 1999 by Copper, Robertson & Partners under the direction of The St. Joe Company. The community is divided into multiple districts – Gulf District, Beach District, Park District, Lake District, Cottage District, Crossing District, and Camp District. On the eastern end of WaterColor resides the town center with the primary beach access, Cerulean Park, Boat House, Western Lake, and Tennis Center. Further

Santa Rosa Beach has an unexpected history. Today it is a lively community that has a strong local population and also draws in thousands of vacationers every year; however, it was once in danger of becoming a ghost town. In the early 1900s the town had just begun to gain its footing as an agricultural center, but all of the crops were wiped away by a devastating hurricane in 1926. Soon after, the town was plagued by an outbreak of yellow fever and suffered further under the effects of World War II and an economic depression. What was left of the town was dismantled for lumber by neighboring towns.

In the 1950s the town began its revival with the establishment of new roads and neighborhoods by C.H. McGee Sr. Over the years that followed, more neighborhoods were developed by investors and architects who could see that the area had untapped potential. Today Santa Rosa Beach is a beloved vacation destination with beautiful rental homes and nearby beaches. The town still holds onto its history though. A piece of the town’s early history is preserved at Eden State Gardens. In the midst of these beautiful gardens lies the Wesley Home, an estate roughly 120 years old. The gardens and home are open for public tours and house historic heirlooms and antiques.

The stories of County Highway 30A are many. Become a part of the story by visiting County Highway 30A with your family and loved ones. It’ll be a trip for the books. ★

CHECK OUT OUR
RESTAURANT GUIDE
to see our recommendations
for the best dining on 30A!
PAGE 114

