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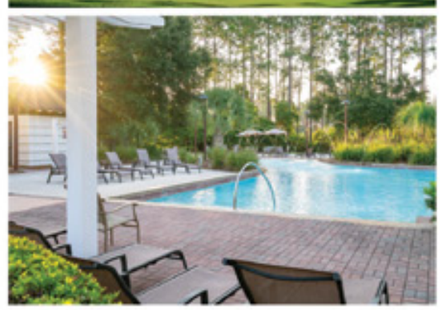
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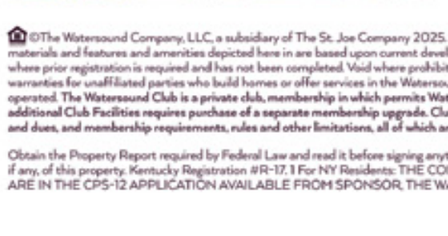
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Features

18
Journey to Joy
Kristin Cavallari's Pursuit of Peace and Purpose

50
Hamptons of the South
Scenic 30A's Upscale Allure

78
Ben Hicks
A Conservationist's Eye Beneath the Waves



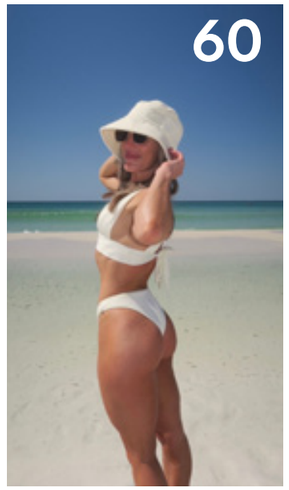


Table of Contents

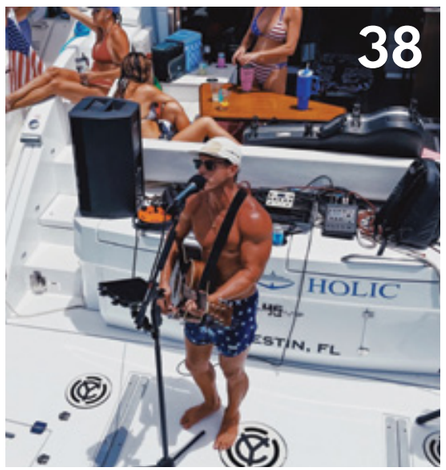
Issue 19 Winter 2025











28
Coastal Creatives
30A's Beauty Fuels Artistic Inspiration

38
Finding His Voice
Jared Herzog's Return to His Roots

46
Bugaloe Bliss
Aruba's Beloved Beach Bar Delivers Fun in the Sun

60
Building Balance
Kiley Miller's Guide to Wellness and Joy

66
Coastal Cozy
Must-Have Winter Beach Essentials

70
Jonah Allen
Riding Hurricane Helene's Unforgettable Waves

88
Beach Happy Cafe
Coastal Charm, Fresh Flavors, and Smiles

94
Savoring the South
Gulf Coast's Best Southern-Inspired Eats

100
Dream Beach Homes
8 Stunning Retreats Along Scenic 30A

108
Winter Sunshine
Sean of the South's Heartfelt Reflections

110
Drive Change
Support Scenic Walton with 30A's Charity Plate



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Thoughts From The 30A Guy



STAGNER OCTOPUS
by Andy Saczynski

SEASON OF JOY

As winter settles in, the vibrant stories in this issue invite us to embrace both reflection and renewal—hallmarks of the season. Along 30A and beyond, life continues to inspire, surprise, and bring us together, be it through creative pursuits, culinary delights, or awe-inspiring moments in nature.

Our cover story features Kristin Cavallari, whose journey from reality TV stardom to entrepreneurship and motherhood offers a masterclass in balancing ambition with authenticity. Her reflections on happiness, purpose, and clean living resonate deeply with 30A's ethos of intentionality and joy.

We also spotlight the creative magic that our unique coastline inspires. From Doug Foltz's evocative oil paintings to Allison Wickey's dynamic landscapes and Andy Saczynski's eco-conscious mixed media, these local artists remind us how deeply the beauty of 30A fuels creativity and connection.

For food lovers, we've rounded up the best of Southern-inspired cuisine along Northwest Florida's coastline. From shrimp and grits to inventive fusion dishes, these culinary gems capture the flavors and hospitality that make this region so special.

Jonah Allen takes us on a thrilling journey into the wild power of Hurricane Helene, blending the adrenaline of surfing massive waves with the art of photography. On a more introspective note, marine photographer Ben Hicks shares his dedication to protecting the fragile ecosystems that inspire his work.

For those seeking balance in the New Year, fitness influencer Kiley Miller offers simple, sustainable steps to build a healthier lifestyle. Her candid approach to wellness and joy reflects the heart of 30A living—progress over perfection, and savoring the small wins.



Finally, explore the charm of Beach Happy Cafe, an iconic stop for fresh flavors and laid-back vibes in WaterColor, and learn how you can contribute to preserving the beauty of Walton County through Scenic Walton's impactful initiatives.

At the heart of it all, this issue is a reflection of the values we hold dear as a community—creativity, resilience, and a shared love for the coast. As you dive into these stories, I hope they inspire you to savor the season and embrace the little joys that make life along 30A so darn special.

Here's to a winter filled with gratitude, connection, and plenty of reasons to smile.

Beach Happy, my friends.

Mike Ragsdale
Founder, The 30A Company



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BEACH HAPPY Team



Gary John is the CEO & Partner at The 30A Company. Gary and his family relocated to 30A from California in 2020, after first discovering it on social media in 2018. Upon their first visit in 2019, Gary and his family fell in love with the community, the beautiful landscape, and everything 30A has to offer. Gary's background spans product and venture development, branding, social media, and consumer product launches. He leads the 30A team across the board, working with the sales, marketing, and editorial teams to ensure the 30A company continues to deliver beach happiness through media, content, editorials, and products. You can reach Gary at CEO@30A.com.

Gary John
CEO & Partner



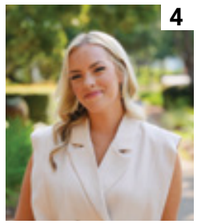
For over 13 years at The 30A Company, I've had the privilege of crafting stories that capture the essence of beach life while celebrating the spirit of those who embrace it. My journey—from Mumbai's bustling coastline to the tranquil beaches of Goa, and now to Vietnam's vibrant shores—has deepened my love for life by the water. My greatest joy comes from weaving together narratives, visuals, and layouts, adding a touch of beauty to the world through each issue of *Beach Happy*. Whether you're landlocked or have your toes in the sand, I hope these stories bring a bit of sunshine to your day and inspire your own sunny moments by the shore.

Amandeep K
Editor-in-Chief











1. Hailing from the vibrant city of New Orleans and now residing in North East Alabama, my fondest memories involve vacationing on Florida's Gulf Coast beaches. Embarking on my design journey quite some time ago, I've been privileged to work across a spectrum of genres and platforms. With time, my expertise has honed in on magazine design and publishing, encompassing topics from travel to healthcare, and from education to transportation, with several others sprinkled in between. At *Beach Happy* magazine, I channel this passion and hope to share a sunny greeting with you on the coast someday. (Featured alongside me is my beautiful wife of 22 years, Bobbi.)

David Coffey
Art Director

2. Hailing from Fort Walton Beach, I am a lifelong 30A local. As a proud Air Force brat with a loving family that includes my wife and twins, I've witnessed the dynamic transformation of the Gulf Coast since the early 1980s. With a degree in Broadcast Journalism from Louisiana State University, I've embraced various roles within the realms of on-air local radio and television, and advertising sales. Now, as I celebrate over a decade with The 30A Company as Director of Advertising, it continues to be an absolute delight to collaborate with both local and national clients in the idyllic paradise we call 30A.

Cory Davis
Sales Director

3. My role is full of purpose, balance, and fulfillment while promoting all that we have to offer. You'll find me around town with a drone in my hand, slinging our ever-popular 30A stickers, *Beach Happy* magazine, and everything in between. There's a spark within me that is ignited each and every day as I work with this incredible community. Bringing fellow beach lovers together, near and far, is what makes my role feel less like work, and more like catching up with friends all throughout the year!

Ragan Smith
Brand Ambassador

4. Based on 30A, I manage marketing initiatives for the 30A and Beach Happy lifestyle brands. My responsibilities encompass content creation, social media marketing, influencer collaboration, editorial strategy, and digital media, all aimed at spreading the Beach Happy lifestyle. From dreaming up exciting features for *Beach Happy* magazine to curating captivating social media content, my day to day is a dance between strategic vision and creativity. Put simply, my job is to bring our audience bits of beach happiness each day with hopes of inspiring them to embrace the joy and vibrancy of coastal living from wherever they are!

Logan Burgess
Marketing Manager

5. Raised in Italy's family advertising legacy, I ventured to New York City in the early '90s, immersing myself in the prestigious world of fashion publishing. Over three decades, I've worked as a Creative Director, with contributions to renowned magazines like *Harper's Bazaar* and *Glamour*. My narrative intertwines Old World charm with New World innovation, marked by collaborative endeavors with industry giants and a ceaseless drive for excellence.

Emiliano Neri
Designer



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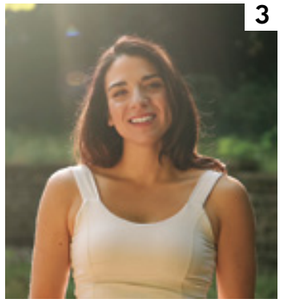


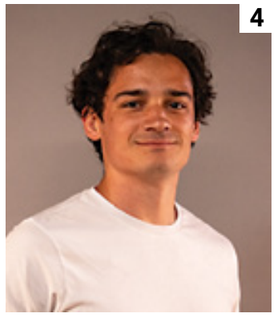


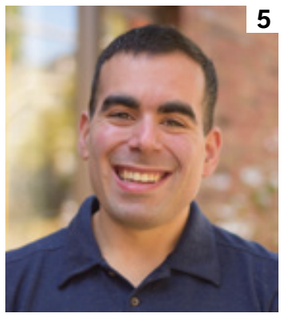
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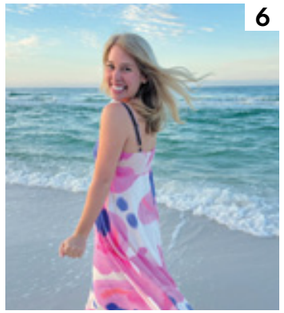

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is an award-winning freelance journalist currently living in Freeport, Florida. Her work has taken her across the South, where she has covered topics ranging from the wily ways of politicians at the Texas state capitol to the storied land of sunshine and swamp sharks (a.k.a. gators) in Florida.

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3 CARMEN SCHOBER
is an author, essayist, and journalist. She lives in Manhattan, Kansas, with her husband and three small children. Enjoy her writing and interviews at CarmenSchober.com or @carmen_schober_writes.

4 BRENDAN MENAPACE
is a writer in Philadelphia whose work has been seen in *Esquire, Spin, Vice, Stereogum*, and more.

5 GEOFF NUDELMAN
is a journalist and copywriter focused on making the world a better place through compelling copy. His writing often covers the intersection of business and culture with a focus on environmental and social issues. He was inspired to contribute to *Beach Happy* following a summer 2024 drive down 30A, exploring each of the towns along the way. You can check out more of his work at geoffnudelman.com.

6 ABBIE LEE WEBSTER
is a journalism graduate with a passion for immersive storytelling. When not writing, Abbie Lee can be found playing with her golden retriever, hitting tennis, or collecting seashells along the coast.

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Journey to JOY

From Reality TV Star to Entrepreneur, Author, and Podcaster, Kristin Cavallari Shares How She Built a Life of Balance and Purpose

By Carmen Schober

Kristin Cavallari is no stranger to reinvention. From her days as a breakout star on reality TV to becoming the powerhouse behind her lifestyle brand Uncommon James, her journey has been anything but predictable.

FROM REALITY STAR TO ENTREPRENEUR

Kristin first became a household name in the early 2000s as one of the standout stars of *Laguna Beach: The Real Orange County*, MTV's groundbreaking reality series about the lives of high schoolers in Southern California. The show quickly became a cultural phenomenon, sparking massive media attention and making Kristin a central figure in the captivating teen drama. She later took the spotlight again in *The Hills,* another beloved MTV series.

"I look at those experiences as radically different," Kristin said reflecting on the highs and lows of being in the spotlight. *Laguna Beach,* in particular, was a tough introduction to fame. "We were manipulated into situations we wouldn't normally experience. It was especially challenging for me as a 17-year-old," she said.

By the time she joined *The Hills,* Kristin approached the role with more confidence. "I treated it like a job. I knew the character they wanted me to play, and I leaned into it. Filming was structured, and I kept a clear boundary between my on-screen and off-screen life. That made it fun—it was like playing a character in a movie."

Over time, Kristin also learned to let go of the challenges that come with being in the public eye. "The headlines and tabloids used to feel huge at



PHOTO: DENNIS LEUPOLD



"It's all about creating products I truly believe in, from jewelry to skincare, and knowing they're good for the people using them."

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNCOMMON BEAUTY

the time, but now, I can only remember two of them," she laughed. "Everything passes. The key is to keep your eye on the bigger picture and not get bogged down by the noise."

Her evolution continued with *Very Cavallari* in 2018, a series that chronicled her life as a business owner and mom. Determined to set her own terms, Kristin took on the role of executive producer. "This time, I wasn't just the star—I was calling the shots behind the scenes."

With her priorities firmly in place, Kristin established boundaries while filming the show. "I was home every day when my kids got back from school. My life wasn't that exciting, honestly, and coming up with storylines sometimes felt like pulling teeth."

The decision to prioritize her family and personal life over dramatic plotlines meant the show lacked the chaotic drama typical of reality TV, but for Kristin, it wasn't about prolonging her reality television days. It was a strategic maneuver to introduce the world to Uncommon James.

THE BIRTH OF UNCOMMON JAMES

Kristin's jewelry brand was born from her passion for accessories. "I've always loved shoes, jewelry, and purses. Honestly, with great basics and standout accessories, that's all you need," she said. And the brand's name reflects another personal touch. "James is my daughter's middle name, and it was also my brother's middle name. I love it for a girl—it's that perfect balance between masculine and feminine."

Kristin launched Uncommon James without a formal business plan, relying on intuition instead. "I had no idea what I was doing," she shared with a laugh. "But I knew the jewelry had to be effortless and versatile—pieces that people could mix and match with what they already owned." Her experience designing a shoe line with Chinese Laundry had given her some valuable lessons in branding. "It taught me more about what not to do than what to do. But the biggest takeaway was learning to trust my gut. I realized I knew my customer better than anyone."

One of Kristin's most meaningful designs is the 11:11 Pendant Necklace. "I have an 11:11 tattoo on my arm—it's a reminder that I'm on the right path. Seeing 11:11 reassures me that I'm never alone."

Uncommon James has since expanded its offerings to include home decor, apparel, accessories, fragrance, and clean skincare through its Uncommon Beauty line. "People constantly asked me about my skincare routine, but when I sent my favorite products to a lab, I discovered they weren't clean at all," Kristin explained. "That inspired me to create something truly non-toxic."

COMMITTED TO CLEAN PRODUCTS

Kristin's commitment to clean living wasn't new—her father's interest in health had already planted some seeds.

"True happiness comes from within. It's something only you can create for yourself. For me, happiness means inner peace, and that comes from living life on my own terms."

But diving into skincare and fragrances opened her eyes even more.

"I was shocked to learn that fragrance companies don't have to disclose all their ingredients. It blows my mind because fragrance is one of the most toxic things you can put on your body." That revelation inspired her to create her first fragrance called Hard Feelings. "I wanted something sexy, feminine, but also a bit unisex. I'm really proud of what we created."

For Kristin, it's not just about selling products—it's also about peace of mind. "My daughter wears our fragrance, and my sons use our skincare. I want to know that if my kids rummage through my stuff, it's safe for them to use." This commitment to transparency is at the heart of Uncommon James. "It's all about creating products I truly believe in, from jewelry to skincare, and knowing they're good for the people using them."

COOKING WITH KRISTIN

Kristin's commitment to clean living traces back to her upbringing. "My dad was always on the cutting edge of health trends, so I grew up with that foundation." However, it wasn't until her first pregnancy that she fully embraced a clean lifestyle. "I decided to eat clean, but I didn't deprive myself. I had carbs, cheese, sweets—everything, as long as it was clean. It was the healthiest relationship I've ever had with food."

This passion for mindful eating inspired her series of cookbooks: *True Roots, True Comfort,* and *Truly Simple*. Each one reflects a different chapter of her journey. "*True Roots* is lighter, for spring and summer, while *True Comfort* is cozy and hearty, perfect for fall and winter," she said. "And *Truly Simple* represents where I am now—balanced and less strict."

Her go-to recipe? "The Bang Bang Chicken from *Truly Simple*. It's a hit with both kids and adults—so flavorful and easy to make." For a sweet treat, Kristin recommends her almond butter zucchini blondies. "They're moist and delicious, and you can't even taste the zucchini. It's a great way to sneak in a veggie."

LET'S BE HONEST

Beyond her work with brands and books, Kristin has ventured into podcasting with *Let's Be Honest,* a platform for candid, thought-provoking conversations. Rather than focusing on celebrities, Kristin invites experts to share their insights. "Celebrities are so guarded. I get it—they're trying to protect themselves, but that doesn't always make for interesting conversations."

Through the podcast, Kristin explores topics that genuinely intrigue her. Whether it's wellness, relationships, or personal growth, she's creating a space for honest dialogue. One standout episode featured Dr. Sherrie Campbell, a specialist in narcissistic abuse. "If you've experienced that kind of abuse, listening to her is like being seen for the first time. The stories are all so similar—it's incredible." Another favorite was her conversation with Dr. Daniel Amen, a neuroscientist known for his brain scans. "He scanned my brain, and it was one of the most fascinating conversations I've ever had."

The podcast has given Kristin a platform to speak freely and connect with listeners on a deeper level. "I'm at a point in my life where I just don't care anymore," she said, laughing. "I'm not trying to build a career in entertainment, and I'm having fun with it." Over the years, Kristin has become increasingly vocal about the world of Hollywood and celebrity culture. "People are starting to wake up to how much manipulation goes on, not just in Hollywood but also in politics," she added. "I think people are craving real, honest conversations."

She also reflected on how her approach to criticism has evolved as she's grown older. "For most of my career, I dealt



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with negativity and criticism. I always said I didn't care, but the truth is, I did—at least a little," she admitted. "But now, something has shifted. Maybe it's turning thirty-eight, or maybe it's living a more normal life away from Hollywood, but I truly don't care anymore. I don't feel the need to play the game."

AN INSIDE JOB

Kristin's perspective on happiness is refreshingly grounded, too. "True happiness comes from within. It's something only you can create for yourself. For me, happiness means inner peace, and that comes from living life on my own terms," she said.

This philosophy has been her compass through every chapter of life—whether navigating fame, building her business, or raising her family. "It's about knowing who you are and what you need to feel your best. Once you figure that out, everything else tends to fall into place."

Her perfect beach day reflects that same freedom. "I stay in a house right on the beach, have coffee with my feet in the sand, and just relax with my kids and friends. No agenda, no to-do list—just enjoying the moment. Day-to-day, my life is full, and balancing work with my kids' activities can be overwhelming at times. That's why a perfect vacation, for me, is one where there's nothing on the calendar. It's all about being present and letting go."

And when it comes to favorite beach destinations, Cabo holds a special place in her heart, while Florida's Scenic Highway 30A, with its laid-back vibe, reminds her of home. "Grayton Beach on 30A is one of my favorites because it's so relaxed. There's no pressure to look a certain way or to keep up appearances. It's just casual and real."

Kristin's minimalist approach extends to her beach bag, too. "I don't bring much—just a book, headphones, chapstick, sunglasses, and a hat." But her commitment to wellness carries into her sunscreen choices. "I always opt for zinc oxide-based sunscreens, especially for my face."

WHAT'S NEXT FOR KRISTIN?

Looking ahead, Kristin's gearing up for an exciting four-city podcast tour in March, stopping in Atlanta, Chicago, Boston, and New York. "I'm really looking forward to connecting with people in a new way."

Beyond that, whether it's running her business, hosting her podcast, or relaxing on the beach with family and friends, she's found her peace and plans to hold onto it. Her advice for others wanting the same? "Reflect honestly on what you want and what genuinely brings you happiness. Don't be afraid to pivot or let go of what no longer serves you."

Follow Kristin Cavallari on Facebook and Instagram (@KristinCavallari) for updates and inspiration.



The Joy of Coastal Creatives

How Florida's Scenic 30A Fuels Creativity and Happiness Among Local Artists

By Susan Gunn

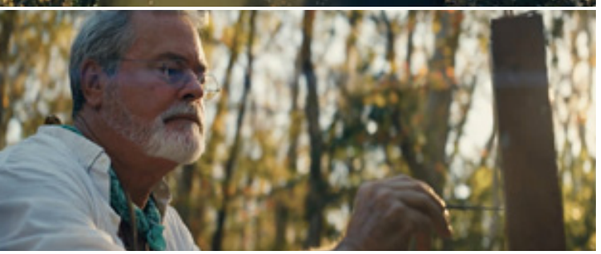
The history and evolution of Scenic Highway 30A, along Florida's Gulf Coast, is long and multi-faceted. This once-remote stretch of coastline has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in America and one of the most sought-after relocation spots to live. For some, the draw is as simple as a relaxing beach vacation, but for others, the allure goes deeper. If you know anything about the area of coastal 30A, you know the flora and fauna are storied, still plentiful, and rare. Our coastal dune lakes are brackish bodies of water that naturally exchange with the Gulf of Mexico and hold an organic beauty that sustains a biodiversity that only occurs in a few other locations on our planet. It's no surprise that creatives of all types are drawn by and deeply connected to the area. It is becoming a mecca for artists, painters, photographers, sculptors, writers, and storytellers—a place where deep thinkers can connect their creativity directly to their home surroundings and discover inspiration to express their craft, and thus find happiness.

There is no shortage of wonderful expressive artists in our little Florida paradise, but here are three talents that were recently willing to share their thoughts on how they find happiness in relation to their artistry and this incredible place they each call home.

PHOTO BY AERIAL 850









Doug Foltz

Doug Foltz is a multimedia artist with a specialty in oil painting. His works are found across America as well as internationally. Doug owns Salt Crust Studios in Santa Rosa Beach.

"I think it's probably tough to pin down a single thing that makes me happy, but at the top of the list is the concept of not trying to be somebody I'm not. The truth in most creative endeavors is that they're not about changing who you are but about exploring and connecting with who you are. If you can love the process rather than the product, if you can get into the active, exploring, connecting with yourself and exploring who you are, and bringing that out through your work to inspire and connect to the people, I think you're going to be there. I've always been happiest when I've been myself and been confident in myself. I grew up in South Florida on the water's edge, and I was in the water constantly, and I've always found my greatest peace, my greatest happiness in the natural world. My father was a hobbyist painter, and I have great memories of standing next to him—big guy, little guy, big canvas, little canvas—working on things together, so I think my relationship to the creative act and to the natural world grew in me from an early age through familial love. When I left South Florida to pursue a life in other parts of the world, I never left the water, in my heart or in my head, so when I came back to 30A and realized that I could make a living here doing what I love so much, it was without question a natural migration for me to spend my time in all the wet, salty edges that we have here. And that's the subject of what I paint. There is no shortage of inspiration if that's what you're into. This place has changed tremendously over the last forty years, but one of the things that has never changed is that I can go out into the coastal dune lakes, I can go out into the Choctawhatchee River and the bay and see things that I saw forty years ago here. I can still draw from those areas the same inspiration, the same personal peace, the same personal growth and development that I put into my work. If I can authentically put that out there for other people without regard for whether it pleases the market, but make certain it pleases me, hopefully other people will connect with it and find joy. I think that's the best that I can hope for."

Salt Crust Studios
416 County Road 393 South,
Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

dougfoltz.com





PHOTO: ALEX LEWIS

Andy Saczynski

Andy Saczynski is a mixed-media artist who creates one-of-a-kind woodcut wall sculptures that incorporate recycled materials and found objects, as well as colorful and expressive paintings and large mural installations. Andy owns The Saczynski Gallery in Grayton Beach.

"The things that bring me happiness in relation to where I live are also the things that bring joyful inspiration to my artwork. I've spent the majority of my life in the Florida panhandle, so the incredible landscapes and natural beauty of the Gulf of Mexico are part of my core memories. I fell in love with the Gulf's unmatched turquoise colors at a young age and have always been fascinated by waves. Naturally, I gravitated to surfing. The carefree feeling of weightlessly gliding on a wave brings so much joy and happiness to me. That feeling is subconsciously expressed in my work. Surfing is not only a great way to connect with nature, but it is also beneficial for the mind, body, and soul. The combination of surfing and the interactions with sea life, not to mention the amazing sunrises and sunsets, gives me constant inspiration to create art that reflects my feelings and memories of happily living on the Gulf Coast."

Saczynski Gallery
26 Logan Lane, Unit B
Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

andysaczynski.com







Allison Wickey

Allison Wickey is a local artist specializing in local landscapes, marine animals, and seascapes. She owns A. Wickey Studio in Santa Rosa Beach.

"I feel so fortunate to live somewhere that supports my career because so many locals and visitors purchase and cherish original art. Being an artist has been the best job I can imagine. It not only affords me the opportunity to make my own hours, but it also allows me to be more flexible for my kids' sakes. Another huge source of joy regarding my career and this community, besides the never-ending inspiration provided by our breathtaking landscapes, is how I am able to raise funds for people and animals in need, arts education, and environmental conservation—all through painting and donating my work to fundraising auctions. Charitable art donations have helped feed thousands of undernourished children in our country via FOOD FOR THOUGHT, helped fortify the Point Washington Medical Clinic, helped build an arts building and art facility for children in Kenya, and supported our fabulous Sinfonia Gulf Coast. I've also enjoyed donating my time and paintings to the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County. I feel so fortunate that I get to work closely with local grassroots innovators who are working on making Walton County more livable for everyone. It feels amazing to give back to a community that has given me the ability to curate a life of my dreams."

Allison Wickey Studio Gallery
South 393, 30A, Florida
(Open by appointment,
text 850-420-8419)

allisonwickey.com



PHOTO: NOAH ESCOBAR

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JARED HERZOG FINDS HIS VOICE ON 30A

THE NICEVILLE NATIVE TOOK A WINDING PATH TO GET BACK TO WHERE HE STARTED, INCLUDING TV COMPETITIONS, COLLEGE SPORTS, NASHVILLE, AND EVEN ALASKA. NOW, HE'S HERE TO STAY.

BY BRENDAN MENAPACE

Jared Herzog's journey has come full circle, bringing him back to where his story began.

It all unfolded when Herzog unexpectedly found himself back on TV, a door he thought had closed before it fully opened. Herzog, like many kids with a good singing voice, stage presence, and ambition, auditioned for *American Idol* when he was a teenager. Judges Harry Connick, Jr., Keith Urban, and Jennifer Lopez passed on him, but they recognized his talent and encouraged him to keep singing.

He did, participating in all-state choruses and eventually pursuing a vocal major at Lee University in Tennessee. He also ran on the cross country team. (You have to keep those lungs in shape somehow, right?)

Later, he auditioned for *The Voice* as part of a duo. There were a few call-backs with producers, but nothing came of it. However, while in college, there was a chance to audition for *The Voice* in Nashville.

Herzog was hesitant, having already been through the wringer on *American Idol* and experiencing the discouragement and judgments of this world, but he gave in to some peer pressure from a friend and his then-girlfriend.

A bit to his own astonishment, he made it through. It was actually a lot to his astonishment, because he hadn't planned on staying in Nashville that

night and had to ask a friend to crash on his couch.

Thus began a bit of a whirlwind experience for Herzog, a kid from Niceville, Florida, who grew up in a very religious household, far removed from the bright lights of show business.

He was now faced with the question of aligning his talents with one of the *Voice* mentors – Blake Shelton, John Legend or Gwen Stefani, who Herzog confesses he didn't really know of until the show.

"I grew up in a classical music household, a very Christian household. We didn't listen to a lot of secular radio, so I didn't really know her too well," he laughed. "And so, I went with John Legend. I got to work with John and then Usher as our battle guest coach, which was really cool because I've always been a big Usher fan."

(Now's the time to check out *Tragic Kingdom*, Jared. It still holds up.)

Herzog did not win *The Voice*, but he reflects on the experience without regret. In his opinion, it was a bonus after a few attempts that didn't make the mark. He's still friends with the musician who beat him on the show.

He was playing with house money. Most importantly, he was playing music with new people and getting better each time. So, with college graduation looming in 2020, he was faced with where to go in his life: pursue his musical dream, or pursue what he saw as the "safe" road laid out by his marketing degree. He made the jump to Nashville, figuring he could ultimately feed both sides of his life there.

As it turned out, 2020 was a tough time to find a job in marketing – or really in any industry for that matter. Performing live music was equally challenging.

"I couldn't get a job in marketing. I couldn't get a gig anywhere. They weren't hiring musicians because everything was, you know, affected by the pandemic," Herzog said. "I was just driving Ubers, and I got to the point where I was having to get some financial assistance from my parents, which I had vowed never to do. I never wanted them to have to take care of me after college was over. And so I made the decision to move back home."

That decision happened when Herzog was about as far away from Nashville as one could theoretically get and still be within the continental United States. It was during a trip with his father and some friends in Alaska in the fall of 2020 that he found himself really looking at the paths he had taken. He already had experienced so much adventure for a man of his age, including rejection, acceptance, and chasing dreams that typically take a lifetime to pursue for so many people.





Top: Jared goes head-to-head with Will Breman during the Battle Round on NBC's *The Voice*.

Bottom: Team John Legend, Season 17

Herzog's seemingly unshakeable confidence—the kind required of star athletes and performers—began to waver. It bent, but didn't break, as his usual "I'm just happy to be here" attitude became harder to hold onto.

"We were sitting at a small brewery, and I was talking to my dad, feeling really discouraged," Herzog said. "I had built up so much momentum, but then the pandemic hit, and I started wondering if I'd ever get an opportunity to pursue music or even find a job." The answer came, and the call was not to Nashville or Hollywood—it was back home, to Florida's Scenic Highway 30A.

"The next morning, while we were still in Alaska, I got a message from a restaurant on 30A called Old Florida Fish House," he said. "They offered me a five-day residency, and I wasn't sure if you could really make a living gigging and covering other people's music. But sure enough, I've stuck with it ever since—and I absolutely love my job."

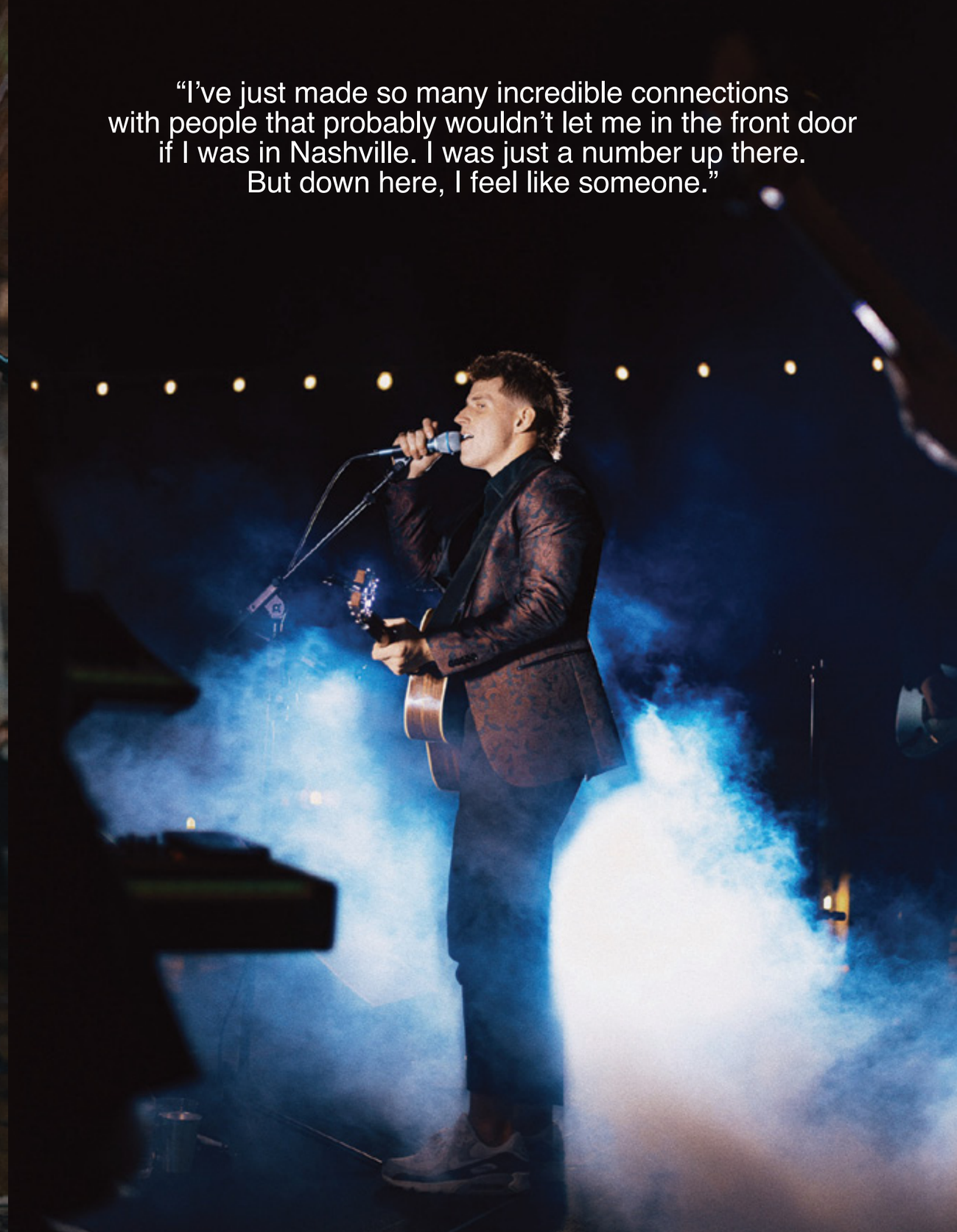
That was life until the end of 2021. After about a year of living by himself in Blue Mountain Beach and playing music, the call of the Music City was just too much to ignore, so he gave it another go, this time finding stages along the famed Broadway with rooftop bar gigs from 10 PM to 2 AM. It was exciting, being that close to the country music flame, but Herzog started to accept that he just wasn't a big-city guy. And if the pandemic taught us anything, it's that you can chase your dreams from the comfort of your hometown, even if it's a few miles or a few hours away from the epicenter of that industry.

Time and again, Herzog pursued his dreams, finding success in unexpected places, but something within him kept him rooted on 30A. It wasn't a tether or anything constricting. It was just something baked into his DNA that recognized he was home, and now that comfort and familiarity allows him to do his best work. Being surrounded by friends and family, including his cousin who moved in with him following a breakup, gave him a sense of stability.





“I’ve just made so many incredible connections
with people that probably wouldn’t let me in the front door
if I was in Nashville. I was just a number up there.
But down here, I feel like someone.”



It all gave him a root system, planted firmly in the place he calls home to this day. He's a quarter-mile from the beach where he takes his dog to run around. His parents and childhood friends live just minutes away. And, of course, he's still playing music on a regular basis, which was the whole dream he left home to chase in the first place. Ironic, isn't it, that it was waiting for him here the whole time?

"I love my home," he said. "I love my hometown. I love my locals. I love my local following. My parents live fifteen minutes down the road. There's a lot of comfort and peace for me here."

Even still, Herzog weighed the move back up to Nashville again, and even honed in on a specific apartment, but ultimately chose to remain on 30A. It inspired a song recently, too.

"You know, I just wrote a song a few months ago called 'Leaving Summer,' because my intention was to leave and go back to Nashville," he said. "It was also a love song that I wrote to home and talked about just how deep my love for this area runs."

It also doesn't hurt that this particular part of the country has its own rich musical history. It's not like Nashville has a monopoly on the music industry.

The shoreline and the laid-back, friendly lifestyle often draw people from major show business hubs, including stars like Jason Aldean, Luke Bryan, and Chris Stapleton, who own vacation homes in the area. It's also a favored retreat for producers and label executives—those with less name recognition—seeking a Southern escape.

Herzog is not naive to this fact.

"A big thing I learned was that half of Nashville and half of Atlanta, and all these producers and artists, come and vacation here," Jared said. "I've made so many incredible connections with people who probably wouldn't let me in the front door if I was in Nashville. I was just a number up there. But down here, I feel like someone."

To learn more, visit jaredherzogmusic.live or follow him on Facebook and Instagram (@jaredherzogmusic).

The answer came, and the call was not to Nashville or Hollywood–it was to home. To 30A.

ARUBA'S BUGALOE

Creating Unforgettable Memories That Keep Guests Coming Back

By Lauren Sage Reinlie

Nestled between two towering high-rise resorts on Aruba's famous Palm Beach is an unassuming pier jutting into the Caribbean Sea. A venture down its wooden planks uncovers Bugaloe, one of Aruba's most cherished beach bars.

On a recent visit, I stepped off the sand around noon on a ninety-degree day, walked past the small gift shop and to-go counter, and entered the shaded bar and dining area, struck by a salty, refreshing breeze. Clear, turquoise water stretched as far as the eye could see. From any table or bar stool in the house, the view was spectacular. The vibe was relaxed but playful and fun.

Boats pulled up to dock alongside the bar, letting off small groups of passengers in wet swimsuits and cover-ups. Others came in straight from the beach, where they had been lounging under thatched-roof palapas, taking in the sights and sounds of one of Aruba's most famous stretches of sand.

The barstools were full with a mix of locals and visitors, but tables were still available during lunch hour. Family-friendly American hits played over the speakers, loud enough to get your shoulders moving and hips swaying yet quiet enough to allow conversation. A couple arrived and shimmied their way to a table right alongside the water.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BUGALOE BEACH BAR & GRILL, ARUBA.





Bugaloe's menu will satiate any beach-goer's appetite for food and drinks, but it's the setting and the ambiance that really sets the place apart. "I travel to other countries about three times a year," Aruban native and Bugaloe's manager Michael Gomes told me. "Every time I go to a new place, I try to find a bar with the same ambiance as this one, and I just can't."

He attributes the unique feel of the place to his crew of servers, bartenders, and back-of-the-house staff. "We're like a family. Even outside work, we're always together," he said. "We ensure our guests feel that energy and become part of the family. You find people who have been coming to the island for thirty years and they don't know the rest of the island, but they keep coming back to Bugaloe."

ONE HAPPY AND SAFE ISLAND

Aruba, a constituent country of the Netherlands, is one of the southernmost Caribbean islands, located just eighteen miles off the northern coast of Venezuela. Many of its just over 100,000 residents speak some combination of four languages: the local dialect, Papiamento, Spanish, Dutch, and English. People from over ninety nations across the world call Aruba home.

It's known as "one happy island," and Michael told me it's not just a loose saying. "People here aren't nice because they've been taught to be—it's simply who we are. It's ingrained in our culture and how we've always been. That's how we treat each other, and it's what visitors love when they come."

He said another reason people love to visit Aruba is its safety. It is consistently regarded as one of the safest of the twenty-six countries in the Caribbean. "I've never been to a place this safe," he said. "You can walk outside on the beach at one o'clock or two o'clock in the morning with no problem."

The entire island is about six miles wide and twenty miles long. It's easy to explore from tip to tip by car, and visitors most definitely should. In addition to the soft, sandy beaches, the island features arid plains covered with thick patches of prickly cacti, large rock formations, and the unique divi-divi and fofoti trees, which have been beautifully shaped and curved by the island's strong trade winds.

September is the quietest month on the island. "School starts again, and everybody has spent all their summer vacation money," Michael said. And the busiest? "Every other month."

SINGING, DANCING, DRINKING

After the sun tips from its highest point in the sky, Bugaloe's servers and bartenders scurry around, moving tables out to the unshaded outer portion of the bar, creating more waterside seating and opening up the bar area to something that looks like a dance floor. One server pauses to dance with my toddler, who has fully embraced the rhythm.

"Is there dancing?" I asked Michael.

"A lot of dancing," he replied with a smile. "Dancing to our playlist, dancing to the bands, dancing with the singing waitresses."

So, there's also singing. During one of the bar's two happy hours, the waitresses sing. "They're really good," Michael said. Patrons sing along and request songs. Everyone joins in. "We're the only bar on the island that does it."

Drinks are served all day long (even at breakfast), and Michael said their wide selection sets them apart from the nearby resort bars. They serve beers from the local brewery Balashi, along with European beers and hard-to-find American favorites. They also have an extensive liquor list, including Papiemento vodka (used in their Crioyo Bliss alongside fresh lime juice, lemonade, and wild berries). Other popular drinks include the island's famous Aruba Ariba, a fruity rum punch, and the Bugaloe Passion, a giant frozen mango margarita served in an oversized cocktail glass with a Balashi Mango Magic beer turned upside down on top.

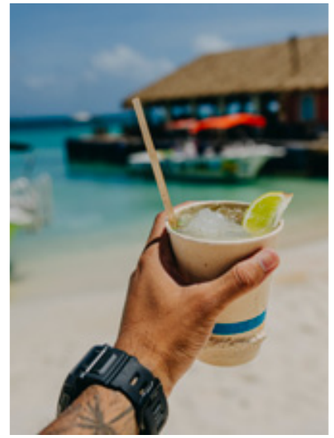


PROTECTING THE CONCEPT

After happy hour, Bugaloe hosts different musical entertainment each day of the week: DJs, country nights, live bands, karaoke. "We tailor our specials to the specific crowds that visit each night," Michael said. For example, DJ nights draw all the Dutch interns from the hospital, so they put buckets of their favorite beer, Amstel Bright, on special.

But the place doesn't become a traditional nightclub like other locations on the island. "We want to accommodate families," he said. "You can come during the day or at night with your kids." TVs found in many American bars are also absent, a fact I didn't even notice until Michael pointed it out. He said they also want to avoid becoming a sports bar and drawing that sort of crowd.

The focus is on the water, the laid-back vibe, and the warm family feeling that rises to the surface.



"We try to protect the concept as much as possible," he said. "That's why people return. When they're on that plane to Aruba, dreaming of Bugaloe, they know exactly what to expect."

Discover the magic of Bugaloe for yourself. Visit bugaloe.com or follow their updates on Facebook and Instagram (@bugaloearuba).



The HAMPTONS of the South

By Logan Burgess
Photos: Joe Frank Photography

Scenic 30A: The Gulf Coast Gem That Has Everyone Talking

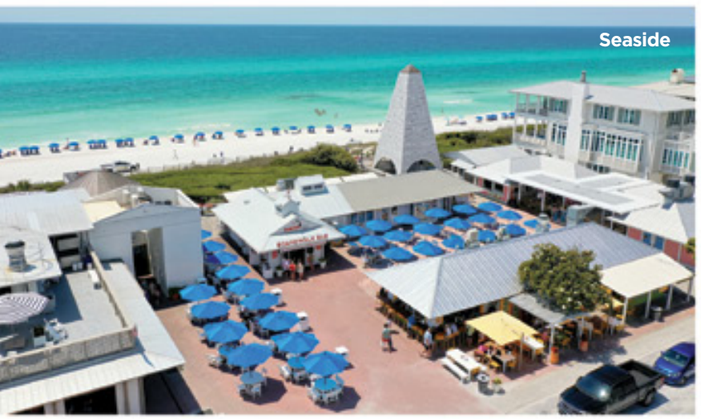
Scenic Highway 30A, a 24-mile stretch along Florida's Panhandle, has quickly become one of the nation's most sought-after beach destinations, earning it the nickname "The Hamptons of the South." Much like the Hamptons, an elegant escape for city dwellers in New York, 30A attracts visitors from across the Southeast, including cities such as Nashville, Atlanta, Birmingham, Dallas, and beyond. Its upscale yet laid-back vibe, breathtaking coastal views, and tight-knit community make 30A a go-to retreat for those looking to unwind and recharge.



Rosemary Beach



Grayton Beach



Seaside

Over the past two decades, what was once a quiet spot on Florida's Panhandle—where many restaurants didn't even stay open during the off-season—has transformed into a vibrant, year-round destination. Today, 30A draws a diverse crowd, from social media influencers to athletes and celebrities. Vacation homeowners and visitors like Sadie Robertson, Eric and Jessie James Decker, Vince Vaughn, Russell Brand, Tim and Demi Tebow, Chris Stapleton, and Jason Aldean are just a few examples of how 30A's charm has captivated both the famous and those fortunate enough to experience its stunning beaches and unhurried lifestyle.

But 30A is more than just its sugar-white sand beaches and charming coastal communities—it's a place where every detail, from its scenic bike paths to its locally-owned shops, invites visitors to embrace a slower, more meaningful way of life. At its heart, 30A is about simplicity, connection, and discovering what it truly means to live "beach happy."

What Sets 30A Apart?

Unlike other beach destinations, this area isn't overrun with towering condos, amusement parks, or boardwalk attractions. Instead, it thrives on its distinct architecture, locally owned businesses, and a deep commitment to preserving the natural beauty of its beaches and rare coastal dune lakes. Spanning 24 miles along Florida's Gulf Coast, the 30A coastline is dotted with unique beach towns, each radiating its own personality. From quaint art galleries and live music venues to farm-to-table dining experiences, 30A invites you to embrace a slower, more intentional way of life.

Perhaps most importantly, people come to 30A not just for a vacation but to bring a bit of the region's "beach happiness" home with them. This concept, rooted in relaxation, simplicity, and a deep appreciation for the beauty of life by the water, is something that visitors and locals alike weave into their everyday lives long after they've returned home.

30A's Beach Towns: Unique Communities Along the Coast

Each beach town on Scenic Highway 30A has its own character, combining to create a collection of unique communities that make 30A a destination unlike any other. Here's a closer look at some of the area's most popular towns and what makes each of them so special.

Rosemary Beach

With its cobblestone streets, lantern-lit walkways, and West Indies-inspired architecture, Rosemary Beach feels like an international getaway right in Florida. This upscale community attracts visitors with its mix of boutique shopping, rooftop dining, and a distinctly European ambiance. Rosemary's pedestrian-friendly design invites leisurely strolls and evenings spent dining under the stars, blending refined luxury with the comforts of beach living.

Alys Beach

Alys Beach stands out along 30A with its striking white architecture and thoughtfully planned design, where every destination—from the pristine beach to the bustling town center—is within a pleasant stroll. Known for its exclusivity, this community offers a serene retreat for those who appreciate refined coastal living.

With cobblestone streets, lush courtyards, and thoughtful landscaping, this exclusive 30A town embodies timeless coastal elegance. Blending Moorish, Mediterranean, and Bermudian influences with courtyards inspired by Antigua, Guatemala, Alys Beach is a destination you must see to believe.

Seaside

Seaside is where New Urbanism was born. With its pastel-colored beach houses and community-centric design, Seaside feels like the set of a classic film, which it was, famously serving as the



backdrop for The Truman Show. Seaside embodies the "beach happy" spirit through its local events, open-air markets, and walkability. Families gather here to enjoy the central amphitheater, local art galleries, and food trucks serving everything from gourmet grilled cheese to freshly caught fish tacos.

Grayton Beach

Grayton Beach is as eclectic as it gets on 30A. Known for its artsy and quirky vibe, Grayton is a place where the unofficial motto is "Nice Dogs, Strange People." This is where visitors come to experience the authentic, unpretentious beach culture of 30A, with colorful bungalows, local art shops, and lively spots like the famed Red Bar. Grayton Beach State Park, with its winding trails and dune lakes, draws nature lovers year-round, adding to the town's untamed, slightly bohemian charm.

Seagrove Beach

Seagrove Beach is one of 30A's most beloved towns, thanks to its blend of old-fashioned charm and modern amenities. Known for its beautiful stretches of coastline, Seagrove is a perfect mix of beach living and local culture. Seagrove is also home to excellent dining, with fresh seafood restaurants offering Gulf-to-table fare and a variety of shops where visitors can pick up unique local goods. With its relaxed pace, Seagrove embodies the quintessential beach town experience, making it a favorite destination for those looking to enjoy the best of both worlds—coastal beauty and tight-knit community.

WaterColor

WaterColor is a nature-focused community that blends seamlessly with its coastal surroundings. With extensive biking and walking trails, lakefront views, and a welcoming feel, WaterColor is perfect for families and those looking to immerse themselves in the outdoors. The town's conservation efforts and focus on green spaces make it a peaceful retreat for those wanting to experience 30A's natural side.

Gulf Place

Gulf Place stands out as one of 30A's most vibrant and artistic communities. This lively area offers a mix of art galleries, boutique shopping, and laid-back dining options, making it the perfect spot to soak up the local culture while enjoying the beach. The town's gathering space, complete with an amphitheater, hosts everything from live music to Farmer's Markets, adding to Gulf Place's charm as a place where visitors can experience both creativity and relaxation in one picturesque location.

Blue Mountain Beach

Nestled between the popular towns of Grayton Beach and Gulf Place, Blue Mountain Beach is a hidden gem along 30A, offering a quieter, more peaceful escape. Famous for its towering sand dunes and the serene waters of the Gulf, this town is a haven for nature lovers and those seeking a slower pace. While more relaxed than some of 30A's busier towns, Blue Mountain Beach still offers a variety of dining spots, art galleries, and rental properties that cater to visitors looking for both tranquility and convenience.

Why 30A is Called the "Hamptons of the South"

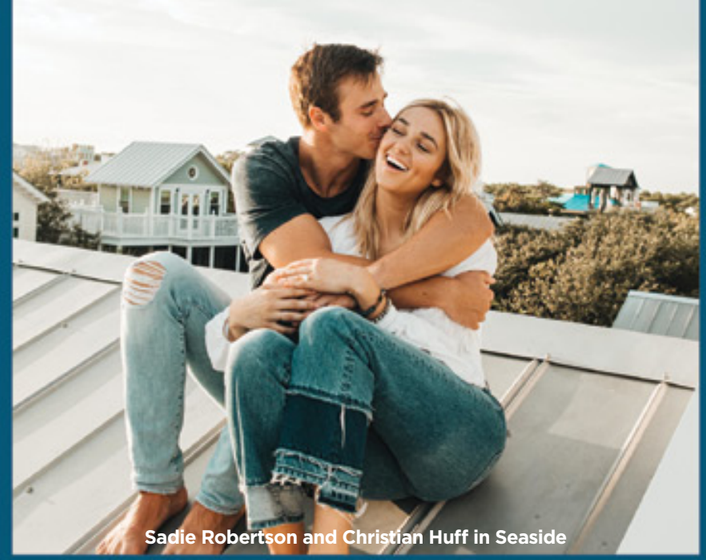
The nickname "Hamptons of the South" isn't just about the high-end real estate or boutique shopping available on 30A; it's an observation of the area's feel and culture. Much like the Hamptons, 30A draws a diverse crowd of artists, business professionals, entrepreneurs, and celebrities, all seeking a relaxed escape from the hustle and bustle



Alys Beach



Grayton Beach



Sadie Robertson and Christian Huff in Seaside

of life. But while the Hamptons carry a certain exclusivity, visitors on 30A feel a part of the local community, creating a sense of belonging that makes it feel less like a vacation spot and more like coming home for the summer.

Over the years, 30A has become a favored retreat for celebrities seeking a quieter beach experience, without the spotlight of places like Malibu or Miami. Here's what some of them have said:

Sadie Robertson: "I met my husband here, so 30A is very special to me. I love the whole vibe of this area. The food trucks, the beach, the people, the energy, everyone is just excited to be here. 30A has it all."

Brian Kelley: "There's just a calm here. Every single time you cross that bridge coming home, you feel a weight taken off instantly."

Jessie James Decker: "The sugar-white sand and the gorgeous emerald water—it's just such a special place to me. I remember saying that when I got older, I was going to have a place down here one day. I wanted to be able to do this with my family. I'm pretty fortunate that I've been able to do that and now it is a happy place for my children. It's our second home."

Nick & Stefany Bare: "One of the first vacations we made as a couple was to 30A, so it's a special place for us. Since then, we've been back multiple times every year, and it now truly feels like our home away from home."

Alexandra Harper: "Honestly, I don't think there's anything in the world that compares to 30A—the way of living, the people, the beaches, the water. I mean, the most beautiful beaches you've ever seen, the shops, the bike riding. You are in a little bubble, and it's my safe place."

Taking "Beach Happiness" Home

For many, visiting 30A is not just about a vacation but about a lifestyle that they want to bring back to their everyday lives. "Beach happiness" is the feeling that comes from a day spent soaking in the sun, sharing laughter with family and friends, and ending with a stunning Gulf sunset. It's about savoring the moment, taking a slower pace, and prioritizing happiness.

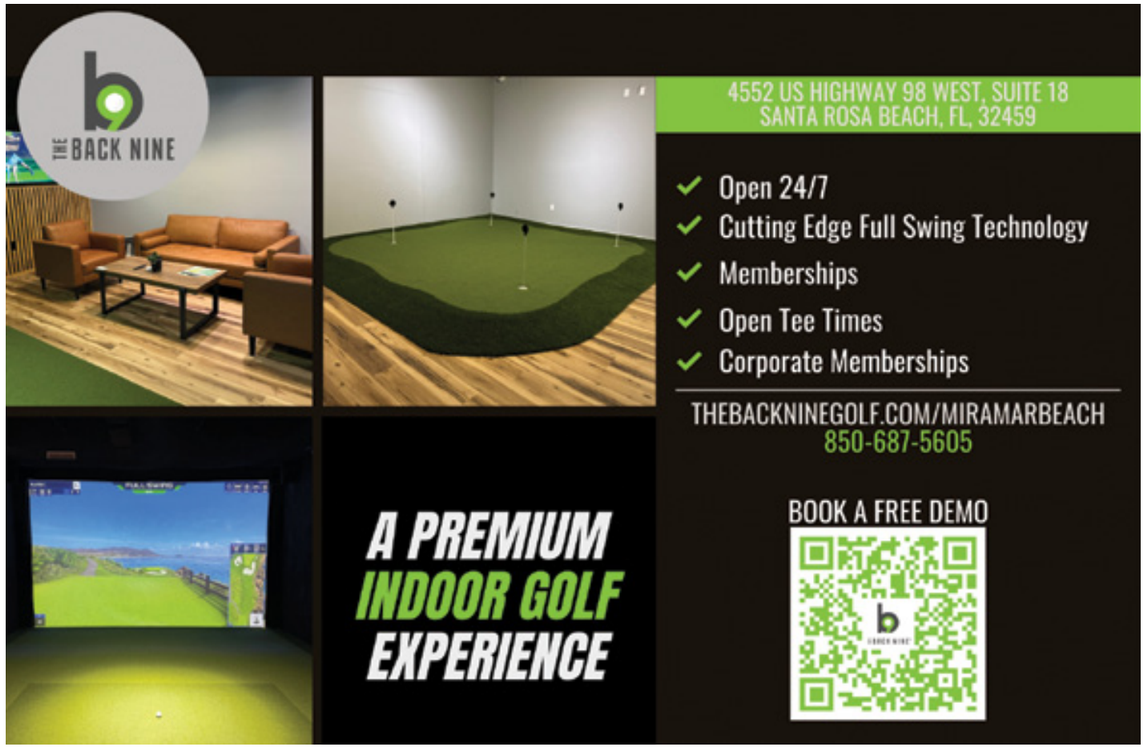
People leave 30A inspired to recreate elements of their visit at home. This could mean decorating their living spaces with coastal decor, making time for more outdoor activities, or simply adopting a more laid-back approach to daily life. The magic of 30A lingers, making it more than just a place on the map but a way of life.

More Than a Destination

While 30A may have earned its title as the 'Hamptons of the South,' it's far more than an upscale beach retreat. It's a place where life moves at a slower pace, where the beauty of nature is cherished, and where every moment feels like an opportunity to experience 'beach happiness.' So whether you're here for the sunsets, the beachside communities, or the allure of simplicity, 30A promises an experience unlike any other.

Ready to experience the charm of 30A? Start planning your perfect getaway today. Explore accommodations and book your stay at 30A.com/lodging.


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30A
30A
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Building BALANCE



Kiley Miller's Guide to a Happier, Healthier New Year

By Carmen Schober

When you first meet Kiley Miller, it's easy to see why so many people are drawn to her warmth and enthusiasm. With her cheerful authenticity and upbeat attitude, she has a way of making fitness feel approachable and even exciting, no matter where you're starting from.

Her Instagram is a fun mix of practical workout tips, adorable moments with her husband, snapshots of new motherhood, and sun-soaked beach days. But behind the pretty posts is a story of determination, passion, and a willingness to grow.

With the New Year approaching, Kiley sat down with us to share her top tips for health and happiness. She also offered a glimpse into the life of a mom, wife, and fitness influencer juggling it all.

Finding Focus in the Chaos

The New Year often comes with a double-edged sword: the promise of fresh starts paired with the overwhelming weight of resolutions. The pressure to transform overnight can leave many feeling stuck or aimless. It's easy to get caught up in all-or-nothing thinking, where every step forward feels overshadowed by the distance to your goal.

That's where keeping things fun and simple makes all the difference. Instead of trying to change everything at once, start with one small habit that feels doable. Something as straightforward as walking 6,000 steps a day can have an enormous impact—not just physically but mentally too. By setting small, achievable goals, you create momentum, and that momentum can propel you into bigger wins as the weeks go by.





"It's all about breaking it down into things that fit your life," said Kiley. "Set a timer for 15 minutes and move your body the entire time. I personally would do squats for a minute, planks for a minute, dumbbell rows for a minute, walking lunges for a minute, and biceps curl-to-overhead press for a minute. Then repeat that circuit three times through. You could easily get away with one set of dumbbells for that whole circuit too, which helps the time element even more."

It's also important to shift how you think about change. Healthy choices shouldn't feel like punishments. Rather than focusing on what you "should" do, reframe it as something you get to do, like nourishing your body with wholesome meals, savoring a short morning walk, or carving out time for a quick workout.

So, if the New Year feels like a whirlwind, don't panic. Start small, focus on progress over perfection, and remember that the New Year is about building something sustainable, not just sprinting to an arbitrary finish line.

From Gymnastics to Social Media Star

Kiley herself is proof that big things can grow from small beginnings. Today, she's a successful fitness influencer with a loyal community, but her love for movement started in childhood.

"I grew up loving to be active. I was a gymnast as a kid, always doing cartwheels in the yard or handstands against the wall," she said. But when gymnastics ended, she found herself with energy to spare—and nowhere to channel it.

Enter her local YMCA. "It was love at first sight," Kiley recalled. "College was when I really fell in love with strength training. I worked at the gym all through school, and people would ask if I competed in bodybuilding. Eventually, I thought, why not try?"

In 2016, just as the influencer world was taking off, Kiley began sharing her fitness journey online. What started as a way to document her progress and snag some free supplements—"Those were definitely not in my college budget!" she adds—quickly blossomed into a thriving career.

"By 2017, my account was really growing. I hoped to inspire people by sharing my journey, and it's been such a blessing to connect with so many people."

Balancing Act

Ask anyone about the influencer life, and chances are you'll hear more skepticism than praise. But Kiley is refreshingly candid about the ups and downs.

"I'm majorly a structure and schedule lover, and I love having people holding me accountable to that schedule. Once I quit my 9-to-5 three years ago, I was worried about staying accountable and concerned that people in my community would find it off-putting that I didn't work a normal 9-to-5 anymore," she said.

Her honesty about how much perception matters is refreshing. "I think we all tell ourselves not to care what others think, but the truth is, as a creator and influencer, you're inevitably going to care about people's perception of you and the choices you make," she said.

Between building her brand and raising her daughter, Kiley doesn't have much free time these days. Her secret? Planning ahead.

"I'm big on using a physical planner. If I tried to plan on my phone, I'd end up opening TikTok instead—every time." Her mornings are sacred, too. "I get up a few hours before my baby so I can have some slow 'me' time in the morning. Usually, this means I'm up around 4:30 or 5 a.m., after her final nighttime feeding, and while it was hard at first, the time I get to myself in the morning helps me be a better mom all day because I'm able to fill my cup before she's up!"

Kickstarting 2025

For Kiley, January is a golden opportunity to set meaningful goals—and she believes the key to success is simple: accountability.

"You've got to write it down and tell people," she said. "I'm big on visualization. Make a vision board. Speak it into existence. Last year, I put 'motherhood' on my board, and weeks later, I found out I was pregnant!"

Her advice for beginners? Start small and stay consistent. Walking, for example, is one of the easiest ways to improve your health. "Research shows walking 6,000 to 10,000 steps a day dramatically reduces early mortality," said Kiley. "If it's too cold outside, get a walking pad—it's a game changer."

And when motivation fades? "I remind myself how much better I feel after moving my body. It's a gift I give myself and my family."

Nourishing Body and Soul

If the term "meal prep" makes you groan, Kiley's no-nonsense approach to nutrition is for you. "I'm not a great cook," she laughed. "So I keep it simple. Protein, fat, and carbs at every meal."

For Kiley, it's all about practicality over fancy recipes. "I'd honestly suggest keeping it simple—prep some carbs and protein for the week, like rice or potatoes with beef or chicken. Adding fat is usually as easy as using ghee or avocado, which is what I do personally."

And when it comes to indulgence, Kiley's philosophy is refreshingly guilt-free. "Most of us can have the foods we want, we just need to be more aware of what a serving size of those looks like and how many days a week realistically we could be having those."

"Most of my meals are whole and nutrient-dense, but if I want a treat, I let myself have it. Life's too short to skip the Dairy Queen Blizzard!"

Her go-to breakfast? Avocado on sourdough toast with eggs and fruit. Dinner might be gnocchi with ground beef, and snacks are equally straightforward—think cottage cheese with fruit or dates paired with cheddar cheese.

For those with busy schedules, Kiley advises prepping staples like rice, potatoes, or chicken in advance. "Add healthy fats like ghee or avocado, and you've got a balanced meal in minutes."

When it comes to indulgence, Kiley lives by the 80/20 rule. "Most of my meals are whole and nutrient-dense, but if I want a treat, I let myself have it. Life's too short to skip the Dairy Queen Blizzard!" She emphasizes that indulgences don't need to derail your goals. "Enjoy your treat, and don't punish yourself for it. Balance is everything."

> “I want to be healthy for my daughter—for her to see me as an example of balance and wellness.”





The Connection Between Physical and Mental Health

For Kiley, movement isn’t just about looking good—it’s about feeling good. “Not working out for six weeks postpartum was one of the hardest times of my life. The minute I was cleared to exercise again, my mood improved tenfold.”

She credits Rhonda Byrne’s *The Secret* with helping her maintain a positive mindset. “It taught me that what you focus on becomes your reality. When you speak positively and focus on gratitude, you attract more good things into your life.”

Motherhood’s Influence

Becoming a mom has reshaped Kiley’s outlook on health. “I want to be healthy for my daughter—for her to see me as an example of balance and wellness. Whether it’s nourishing my body for breastfeeding or showing her that exercise is fun, she inspires me to be my best self.”

That commitment extends to setting the tone for her household. “I try to keep my mornings productive and my evenings calm. A clean space helps me feel less chaotic, and staying off my phone at night makes such a difference.”

Kiley also emphasizes the importance of being present. “These days, I don’t watch much TV or listen to podcasts. I’m just soaking up this season with my daughter, and it’s been refreshing.”

What’s Next?

In 2025, Kiley’s biggest project is balancing her social media career with being a stay-at-home mom. “It’s a full-time job in itself,” she said. “But I might revisit getting my Pilates certification. I was in the process before I got pregnant.”

Her journey is a testament to the power of small, intentional steps. Each choice—whether it’s a 15-minute workout, a nourishing meal, or a moment of gratitude—builds on the last, creating a life rooted in balance and joy. As Kiley reminds us, embracing progress over perfection is the key to lasting change.

Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, there’s something empowering about setting goals with clarity and purpose. It’s not about predicting the future—it’s about actively shaping it through the choices you make each day. Maybe it means carving out time to cook more meals at home, committing to a walking routine, or exploring an activity that truly lights you up. These seemingly small actions serve as powerful reminders of your worth and potential.

With focus, determination, and a little grace along the way, Kiley’s journey shows us that your dreams aren’t as far off as they might seem. The life you envision isn’t just possible—it’s within your reach.

For more practical fitness advice, daily inspiration, and wholesome wellness tips, be sure to follow Kiley Miller on Instagram (@fitbykiki).

COASTAL COZY

WINTER'S MUST-HAVE BEACH GEAR

GEAR UP FOR SHORTER DAYS AND CHILLIER NIGHTS ON THE SHORE

By Geoff Nudelman

As the gentle, crisp air of winter arrives, it's the perfect time to plan for stargazing, bonfires, and cozy gatherings by the shore. It also means switching out your gear for things that are a little sturdier and offer a bit more warmth as the season cools off. We've put together some of our favorites that will make your winter gatherings memorable all year long.





1

FINEX 3 QT. DUTCH OVEN

A low-key, effortless way to have a warm meal after a day at the beach is to simply bring a cast-iron pot, add your favorite ingredients, and place it on the fire. The material can stand up to the high temperature and makes preparing a warm meal effortless. A warm bowl of soup, stew, or cobbler is the perfect way to fend off chilly coastal winter breezes. This option from FINEX is built for a lifetime with integrated Speed Cool handles to make the transition from fire to surface easy and safe.

Finexusa.com
$300



2

FREE PEOPLE SEEA VALENTINA SURF SUIT

As the waters cool down through the winter, it's important to have more coverage if you're heading out to catch waves. This surf suit is made primarily from recycled polyester in the USA—a rarity in modern swimwear. It comes in both a bold and more subdued print, so there's something for every swimmer's individual style.

Freepeople.com
$180



3

BOSE SOUNDLINK FLEX PORTABLE SPEAKER

Don't be caught rushing to protect sensitive electronics during a sudden shift in weather. This speaker is rated to be fully submerged in more than a foot of water for up to 30 minutes, and it is dust/sandproof. Wrapped in tough silicone, it's built to endure the rough and tumble of a day at the beach. Since it's a Bose product, you know it will deliver great sound throughout.

Bose.com
$149

4

30A WORDMARK LOGO EMBROIDERED SWEATSHIRT

For a timeless and versatile option, this relaxed, gender-neutral sweatshirt is a wardrobe essential. Featuring the 30A logo embroidered on the left chest, it's a subtle nod to your favorite coastal getaway. Crafted from soft, durable cotton, it offers a perfect balance of comfort and style. Available in classic hues like Sea Foam and True Navy, this is your go-to layer for brisk beach walks or cozy indoor evenings.

30Agear.com
$70



5

MALLOME TELESCOPING FORK BUNDLE

Is there anything that says “winter” more than roasting marshmallows? Probably not. All roasting sticks are created equal, however. These sticks extend to 32 inches, keeping hands safely away from a roaring fire while getting that perfect charred finish before you pack the melted goodness on a s’more. The colorful handle toppers help keep everyone’s roasting sticks identified, and you can put them away when clean in their own storage pouch. You’ll never lose an errant stick again.

Mallome.com
$22





6

YETI HOPPER M12 BACKPACK SOFT COOLER

A backpack cooler is a convenient way to carry food and drinks to the beach without having to lug a bulky, hard-sided box. This specific M12 model can carry up to 20 cans or 12 pounds of ice. It’s also sized to carry wine. The larger M20 bulks that capacity up to 36 cans or 20 pounds of ice. Plus, the coolers come in a range of eye-catching colors, such as the King Crab Orange seen here.

Yeti.com
$275



7

SNOW PEAK X RUMPL NANOLOFT TAKIBI BLANKET



This durable blanket is the third iteration of a collaboration between Japanese outdoor lifestyle brand Snow Peak and cozy camping blanket producer Rumpl. The topside fabric is fire-resistant while the bottom is coated in a water- and stain-resistant finish. It’s the ideal blanket for evenings by the fire, and it can handle occasional spills with ease. The blanket also comes with a handsome carrying strap that can easily latch onto a gear box or even a backpack.

Rumpl.com
$200



8

NEMO EQUIPMENT MOONLITE RECLINING CAMP CHAIR

If you’ve ever found yourself struggling to get comfortable in the average beach chair, this is a game-changing upgrade. The Moonlite gently leans back with full support thanks to a clever pulley system that supports bodies up to 300 pounds, and it sets up in a matter of seconds. NEMO’s meticulous design ensures this chair will last for years, and at just over two pounds, it’s an easy add to your day bag. NEMO is also a leader in using sustainable materials practically, engineering this chair with a mix of 100% post-consumer recycled materials and bluesign-approved (one of the toughest textile standards) hardware and seat mesh.

Nemoequipment.com
$160



BETWEEN DEVASTATION AND DREAMS

By Jonah Allen

PHOTO: SEAN MURPHY

CHASING WAVES DURING HURRICANE HELENE'S UNPREDICTABLE WATERS

The sky was a blend of a thousand shades of gray, the wind howling, and the Gulf pulsing with energy. As the swell began to peak, the waves towered over 15 feet. I gripped my camera tightly, caught between excitement and vigilance. This was the moment I had been waiting for.

Hurricane Helene wasn't just a category 4 storm. It was the opportunity I'd been waiting for over the last decade. The Gulf of Mexico is a flat, waveless lake for long stretches of time, with only rare storms creating waves of significant size. But when a storm like this forms, it can awaken a world-class wave—one that surfers dream about.

As a Gulf Coast surfer, my relationship with the ocean is one of extremes. I wait months between swells, enduring long periods of stillness. It's unpredictable, an emotional roller coaster, never knowing when the next quality waves will come.

But based on Hurricane Helene's track and strength, I knew this storm could be my chance to capture something extraordinary—to surf and photograph the wave I had been dreaming of.

As the storm drew closer, so did the doubts. Would it hit us directly, or veer east? If it shifted, would the winds be right? Would the swell peak overnight, or arrive in time for us to surf it? And if the waves did arrive before dark, would they be too big for us to even make it out past the break? When the forecast solidified, it looked like everything might align—an 11-foot swell at 14 seconds, coming in

was key to maximizing our ride time on Helene's waves. We knew safety was critical. If the waves hit 15 feet and something went wrong with the jetski or a rescue, the consequences could be fatal. Two other jetski crews were out there with us—surfers Lance Moss and Chase Sasser. All of us were seasoned watermen with thousands of hours in the ocean.

That deep connection with the sea, built over a lifetime, is the real preparation for a swell like this.

By sunrise, there were already 6-8 foot waves, and we knew by dark, it would be an entirely different world out there. By midday, the swell fully arrived, and we surfed a wave that had never been ridden before. We named it Mythics, for its otherworldly presence.

By 2 p.m., our wildest dreams were coming to life—10-



from the perfect 166-degree angle. The right tide at peak swell, and rare light north winds at 10 knots. This kind of event might happen once in a lifetime. It was a fleeting window, and I was ready for it.

Knowing how rare this opportunity was, my friend Ben Bricken and I woke up at 4 a.m. to be in the water at first light. We had a long day ahead of us, a marathon session that required meticulous preparation. Accessing these waves meant getting there by watercraft, so we fueled up the jetski, packed a rescue sled, hydrofoil surf gear, a tow surfboard, my camera equipment, and enough food for 12 hours.

For those who don't know, a hydrofoil is a wing-like shape under the board that lifts you above the water, letting you glide on the swell's energy. Tow foiling with a jetski gives you a boost into the wave, allowing you to catch more of them and ride at speeds up to 30 mph. This technique

foot barrels rolling in consistently. The offshore winds howled, sending wave mist 15 feet into the air. The moment we'd been waiting for all these years had arrived.

For the next three hours, we surfed perfect, towering waves—15-20 feet tall—breaking for over 500 yards. "One of the heaviest moments for me," Ben recalled, "was when I whipped Jonah into a 15-foot bomb, and I saw him get crushed. Before that, I watched him get the first legit barrel on a foil I've ever seen, and then he got absolutely pounded. I thought for sure he was done—either he or the foil was broken. Then, right behind it, six more waves landed on him. But he came up stoked, eyes wide. It was incredible."

After nine hours of surfing, I knew I had to get my camera out. For me, there's always this tug-of-war between surfing and photography.

The Gulf's surf is so fleeting, I usually choose the waves. But this day was too special not to capture.

Ben steered the jetski while I grabbed my camera and housing from the compartment. Despite the rain and the risk of losing the camera to the sea, I removed it from the dry housing for more control. One wrong move, and we'd lose everything. But this was the moment.

Wave after wave pounded the sandbar, each one larger than the last. I steadied myself and the camera, waiting for the perfect shot. Everything had to align—the wave, the light, the timing. "He's asking you to sit in a critical spot on the sandbar to get the shot he wants," Ben said. "And we have to be ready to take a bomb set that could wipe us out."

"At that moment, a massive wave started barreling down the line, freight-training toward us. Every instinct screamed to hit the throttle and get out of there. But Jonah was still firing shots, and right as I was about to pull the trigger, he said, "Don't do it. Don't touch the gas." So I held. We rode up the face of the wave, nearly vertical, looking down into a 15-foot barrel. I could have reached out and touched it. We barely made it over the top."

And in that instant, I hit the shutter. The shot I had been dreaming of, captured in a split second when everything aligned.

For me, this wasn't just about surfing or photography—it was a spiritual pursuit. In the Gulf, where waves are rare and conditions unpredictable, you learn patience in a way that few things can teach you. Surfing and photographing these moments are about connecting to something larger than yourself. When I paddle out or frame a shot, I feel deeply connected to the ocean, the wind, the energy around me. These moments of waiting, witnessing, and being fully present in nature give me a sense of peace and clarity.

When that rare window opens—when the storm brings the waves and all the elements align—it's not just the wave that's the reward. It's the connection to something timeless, something beyond the everyday. Ben and I have traveled the world chasing waves, but what we experienced in the Gulf that day during Hurricane Helene rivals anything I've seen. It was one of the best days of my life.

Hurricanes bring a strange duality. While I don't wish for destruction, storms like Helene offer a rare gift—a chance to experience waves that would otherwise never appear. It's a reminder of nature's power and the delicate balance between hope and chaos. My heart goes out to all those affected by the storm, especially in the Florida Big Bend and Carolinas, who faced its destructive path. While we were fortunate to witness nature's beauty in the Gulf, many others were left to deal with its devastating aftermath.

Surfing and photographing in the Gulf aren't just physical challenges—they are spiritual journeys. In a place where waves are fleeting, you have to trust in nature, embrace its unpredictability, and wait. And when that moment comes, when everything aligns, all the patience, all the years of waiting, become worth it. It's more than chasing waves—it's about understanding the flow of life itself and connecting to something eternal.

Explore more of Jonah Allen's coastal art at jonahallen.com, and stay updated by following him on Facebook (@jonah.allen.studio) and Instagram (@jonahallenstudio).

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5 QUESTIONS WITH BEN HICKS

A MARINE PHOTOGRAPHER'S PASSION FOR CONSERVATION

BY GEOFF NUDELMAN

Florida native Ben Hicks came of age in the heart of photography's digital transition. He picked up his first (film) camera in 1999, and began shooting college sports and professional surfers until an opportunity to shoot sea turtles in 2009 ignited a new passion. He found he could use his talents to raise awareness about conserving these most critical and fragile ecosystems.



"Building trust with a subadult green sea turtle in Boca Raton, Florida." Photo by Logan Graham.

Opposite Page: A serene moment in Raja Ampat, Indonesia. Photo by Alfred Minnaar.





"I have to follow my own path, and I've been able to do that," said Hicks, 44.

Hicks' major break in professional marine photography came in 2013 when *National Geographic* posted one of his photos online. The moment helped him create his own social following and the foundation to take a career telling the story of the seas through a camera lens to the next level.

He has worked with a range of brands before and since, and it's easy to see why. Hicks' photography is stunning and largely untouched. A plethora of iconic, intimate moments with sea turtles are just a few examples of how he shows the vibrancy of what lies just below the surface. Now in the middle of his career, he also donates a number of images to charities such as Ocean Conservancy and Oceanic Society.

We caught up with Hicks between trips from his home in Boca Raton, Florida.

You've been a photographer for 25 years. What do you think are some of the biggest changes you've seen in photography in that time?

I've touched base in a lot of different fields. I came into the analog world, then got spit out into the digital world and I was fortunate enough to be a part of that transition. The move to digital meant that you had to accept that your photos would be shared (regardless of your permission), and I think I've done a good job of managing that.

How do you describe your photography style?

For the most part, I approach it based on the story behind the element of nature. I think about the deeper part of that story—how I can portray that piece of nature in society's mind and understand how to protect it. I always try to do as little processing as possible after I've taken the photo. These days, I'm approaching my photography in more of a conservation way. I'm always trying to figure out different ways of photographing something, especially in ways that are environmentally understandable.

I have to always remember that photography is art, and art can be whatever it is. Today, the expectations of the public have changed. People



"'Stars of the Bahamas' – For over five years, I visited Man-O-War Cay, Bahamas, spending two weeks at a time capturing scenes like this."



"Swimming with dolphins off the coast of Oahu, Hawaii—always a magical experience!"



Above: "In summer, I photograph hatchling sea turtles offshore in the Gulf Stream, often encountering Moon Jellyfish like these."

Below: "An unforgettable moment with a whale shark off the coast of Borneo, Indonesia."



"Capturing the magic of sunrise and a perfect 12-inch wave in Boca Raton, Florida. These shots require patience, timing, and underwater housing with a flash!"



"One of my favorite spots to shoot—Deerfield Beach, Florida."

now have a little bit of guard, and wonder if a photo is real or not. When I teach, I try to show the perspective of what's real versus what's not.

Social media is a big part of your overall brand. How have you evolved your online presence throughout your career?

It's really helped my work and put me on the map in a number of ways, but I have to tread lightly and constantly educate myself. The algorithms and reach have changed. It's a vital part of what I do, and it's often a part of my brand contracts. I feel like social media is still a laughable fact for many, though. I'm trying to tell the story of nature and how it struggles, and sometimes people see that as not helping, but I think it's showing the importance of protecting. Also, my kids see me on social media a lot and I have to educate them on it, including its downsides. It's a societal responsibility and a personal one as a father and husband.

Is there something particularly pertinent or worrisome you're seeing in the marine environment when you do a shoot?

The amount of microplastics in the water. There are a lot of places where coral growth is non-existent, and anything living below the surface is struggling. I'm also seeing condos being built closer and closer to sea turtle nests. I've been around long enough to see some of the change, and I hear about more of it through biologists. A lot of people will ask me about the fate of the oceans, but I'm not an expert in it so I direct them to expert resources.

When you're not shooting, what do you like to do?

I like to stay busy. I spend a lot of time with my family, staying fit, riding my bike, working on old dirt bikes, camping, and traveling. We travel a lot for my job, which often includes partnerships with a hotel chain or a city. This year, we've been to Panama, Mexico, and Costa Rica with our kids. Since my wife works in the environmental sector, our kids are fully saturated (with the state of marine environments). They'll pick up trash any time they see it.

Explore more of Ben Hicks' work at benjhicks.com and follow his latest projects on Instagram (@benjhicks).

"Out near the Hillsboro Lighthouse, I caught this scene with just my iPhone in its housing. The school of mullet was a lucky find in clear, shallow waters."



Above: "A tranquil view of Maho Bay, St. John, US Virgin Islands."

Below: "Sunrise from above! Captured with my drone at the historic House of Refuge in Stuart, Florida."





Savor the Gulf Coast's Happiest Vibes

By Abbie Lee Webster







Fresh Flavors, Sunny Vibes, and Local Treasures Await at This WaterColor Favorite

Love fresh coffee, tasty bites, and beachy vibes? Then 30A's Beach Happy Cafe is for you! Known as the happiest cafe on the Gulf Coast, it's an ideal place to recharge, shop, and savor local delights. Every sip, bite, and warm greeting embodies the charm of coastal living.



PHOTOS: ABBIE LEE WEBSTER

> With its beachy aesthetic, delicious food offerings, and unbeatable location, you're guaranteed to leave with a smile.



Sun, Sand, and Sips

Nestled directly on Scenic Highway 30A in the heart of WaterColor, Florida, Beach Happy Cafe offers more than just great food and drinks—it provides a true coastal experience. Surrounded by surfboards, beach gear, and ocean-inspired artwork, the cafe makes you feel like you've landed in the heart of coastal living. Its relaxed beachside vibe makes it the perfect place to stop in for coffee on your way to the beach, or the long-awaited stop to snag a cold and fresh smoothie after a day of fun in the sun. Whether local or visitor, Beach Happy Cafe is the perfect spot for anyone looking to recharge and relax.



The Menu: Freshly Made and Locally Sourced

Not only does Beach Happy Cafe offer freshly made bites in their kitchen, it also embraces locally-sourced treats from around town. No morning is complete without a fresh cup of coffee, and the cafe delivers. It has partnered with Amavida Coffee to provide the smoothest, highest-quality coffee. Looking for the perfect sweet treat to pair with your morning coffee? Beach Happy Cafe is excited to announce its newest local partner, Charlie's Delights! Each morning, the bakery case is stocked with fresh donuts and an array of sweet, delicious pastries.

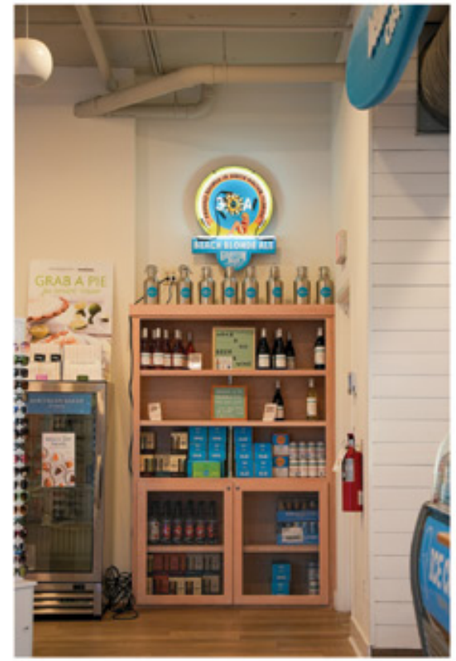
The menu not only focuses on providing options from local vendors, but it also offers a delicious in-house selection featuring fresh flavors that capture the essence of the Emerald Coast. With a range of flaky pastries, hearty sandwiches, wraps and quesadillas, creamy ice cream, and real-fruit smoothies, there's an option for everyone. "I love visiting the cafe. I come a lot after school," said Evelyn O'Connell, a student at the local Seaside Neighborhood School. "My favorite thing is the Mango Sunset Smoothie. It's the perfect afternoon snack."

Choose from favorites like Berry Beach, Sweet Green Wave, Island Fever, and the Peanut Power protein smoothie – perfect to reenergize you after a paddle or run on the beach. Another standout menu item is the Brown Sugar Boba tea – a unique blend of milk, black or green tea, brown sugar, and chewy tapioca pearls. For those looking for something a little more filling, the Early Bird Wrap remains a customer favorite, filled with chicken, egg, pepper jack cheese, and chipotle mayo. They also have an incredible vegan option on the menu. The Summer Vegan Wrap combines hummus, avocado, tomato and carrots, all tucked into a spinach tortilla.



30A Gear and Coastal Goods

No trip to Scenic Highway 30A is complete without taking home a keepsake to remember those gorgeous beaches. The cafe offers the latest 30A gear, showcasing the iconic, laid-back style of the Emerald Coast. From trendy hats and t-shirts to drinkware and candles, you can find the perfect souvenir to take home to remember your time on 30A. The selection also features everything your family might need for a fun-filled day at the beach, such as sunscreen, sunglasses, sand toys, and umbrellas. If you're looking for an alcoholic beverage, the cafe also sells signature 30A beers, 30A hard seltzers, and 30A wine.







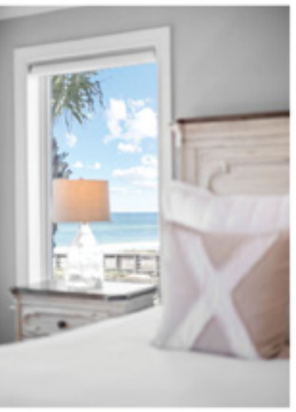
PHOTOS: NOAH ESCOBAR

Delivering Happiness and Coastal Charm

True to its name, 30A's Beach Happy Cafe delivers both happiness and a coastal vibe. Just steps from the coast, its convenient location makes it an ideal spot to grab a snack for the beach. With its beachy aesthetic, delicious food offerings, and unbeatable location, you're guaranteed to leave with a smile. Next time you're in WaterColor, discover the charm of Beach Happy Cafe and make your day a little brighter.

For more information, visit beachhappycafe.com and follow along on Facebook and Instagram (@beachhappycafe).

A NEW WAVE OF 30A REAL ESTATE







Advertising with 30A connects your real estate business to the Emerald Coast's premier media and lifestyle brand, perfectly aligned with your target audience—those who dream of life on 30A. Leverage our powerful media platforms, from high-visibility listings on 30A.com and engaging Instagram reels to impactful advertorials in Beach Happy Magazine, to connect with millions of potential clients.

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Carefully cast to provide a unique shopping and dining experience, our merchants share our vision of a life defined.

For information on events offered in Town Center, visit alysbeach.com/events

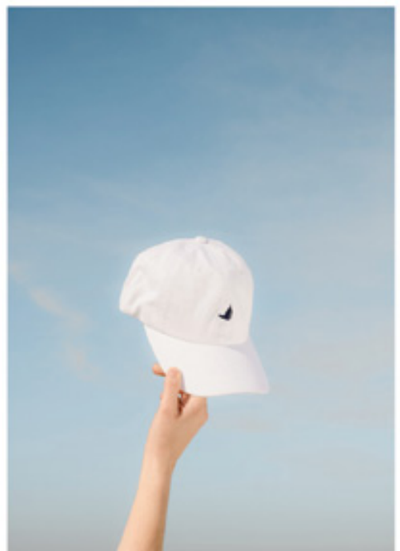
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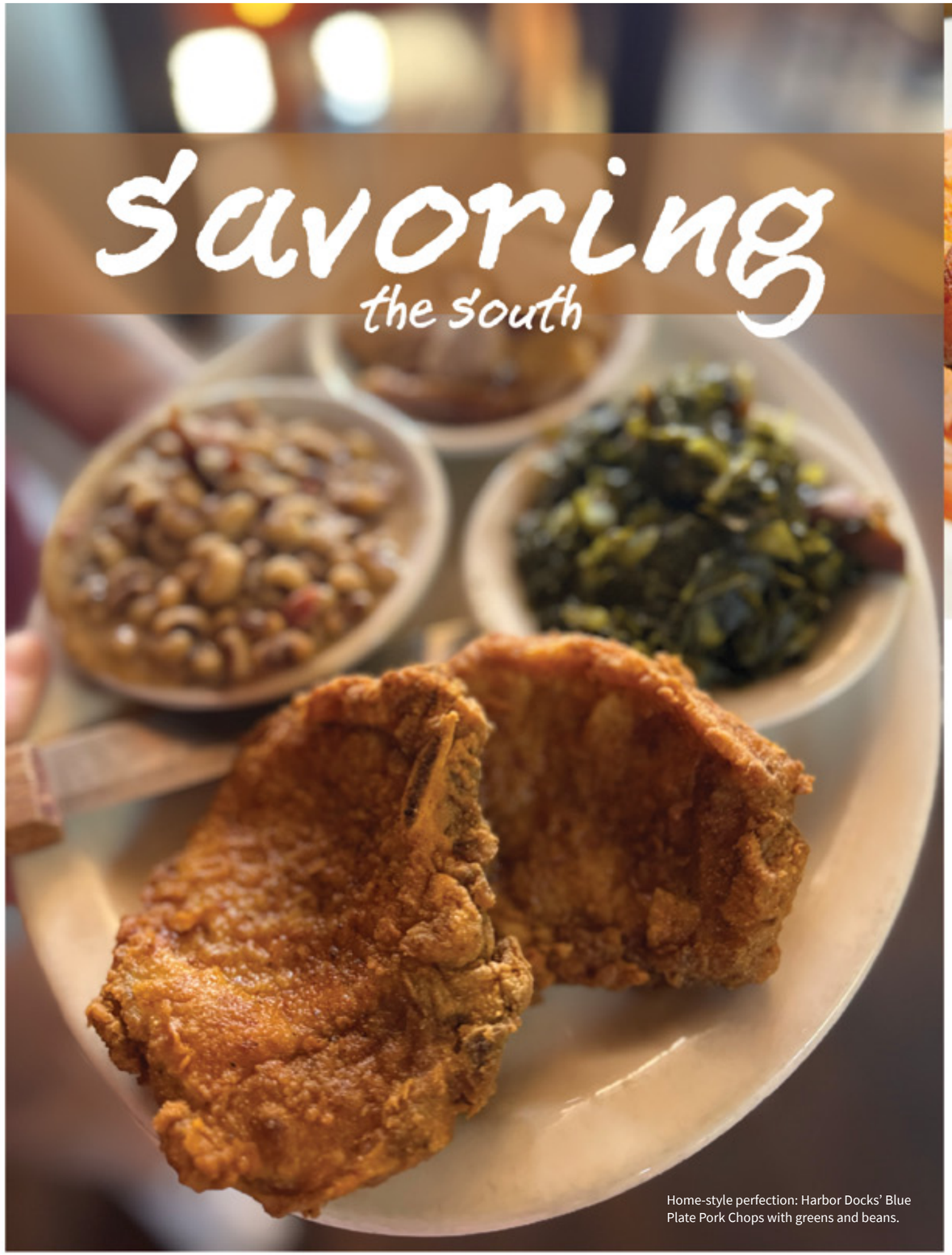












Home-style perfection: Harbor Docks' Blue Plate Pork Chops with greens and beans.



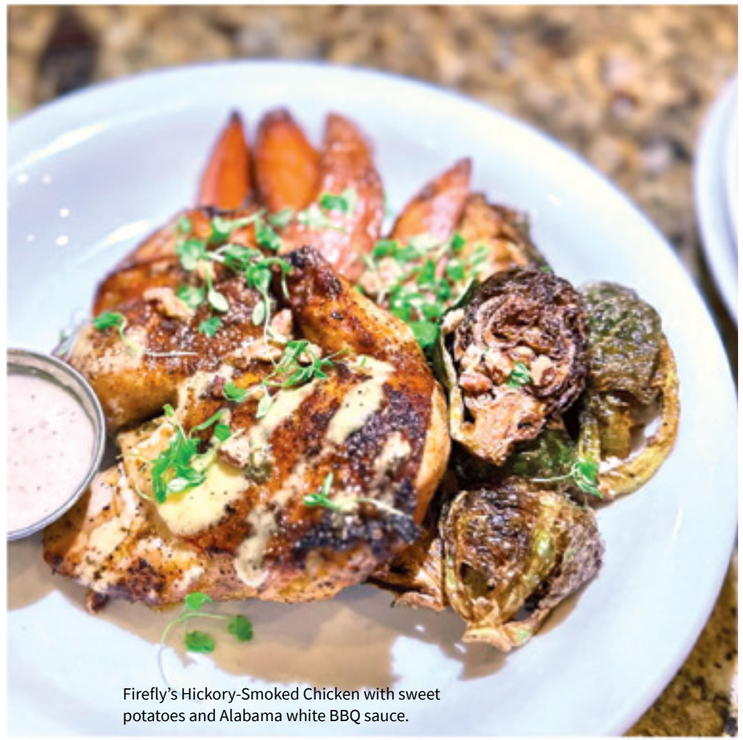
Southern comfort: Firefly's Shrimp and Grits with smoked Gouda and Tasso cream sauce.

Southern Cuisine Highlights Along Northwest Florida's Coastline

By Lauren Sage Reinlie

Southern cooking is as diverse as the region is vast: from barbecue brisket in Texas to Louisiana gumbo to peach pie in Georgia and pulled pork sandwiches in North Carolina. If your travel plans skip a road trip from the Atlantic Coast to Texas and instead take you to Northwest Florida's white-sandy beaches, you can still enjoy down-home cooking to satisfy your Southern cravings.

We've rounded up a selection of restaurants offering Southern-inspired dishes along Northwest Florida's scenic coastline, each delivering their own unique take on Southern flavors.



Firefly's Hickory-Smoked Chicken with sweet potatoes and Alabama white BBQ sauce.

firefly

Tucked away from the bustling high-rise hotels in Panama City Beach, Firefly is anything but your typical beach restaurant. At its heart is a grand oak tree, lending a magical touch to the fine dining atmosphere. Their rotating menu focuses on locally caught and imported fish, and seasonal vegetables, much of it seared on a blazing 1,800-degree broiler.

Chef Rob Burgess, a Le Cordon Bleu graduate, brings his passion for Southern-inspired cuisine to life in every dish. "It brings friends and family closer together," he said.

For a taste of it, try the hickory-smoked half chicken with roasted sweet potatoes, fried Brussels sprouts, Alabama white barbecue sauce, and spiced pecans. Or choose their traditional take on Southern shrimp and grits, a popular Northwest Florida offering, with jumbo shrimp, creamy smoked gouda grits, and a Tasso cream sauce.

fireflypcb.com



PHOTOS: DEVOTE STUDIO

the citizen

The Citizen, located in the gorgeous luxury community of Alys Beach, serves coastal fare in an elegant setting with an extensive cocktail list. *Southern Living* magazine recently recognized it as one of the hottest new restaurants along Florida's Scenic 30A.

While the menu includes options such as steak, smoked octopus carpaccio, and mezzo rigatoni, diners can also find Southern-inspired dishes such as their Louisiana-influenced blue crab beignets with tarragon cream, lemon, and chive; boudin sausage croquettes served with crispy chicken skin, candied jalapeño, pickled mustard, and scallion salad; or, at lunch, a steaming bowl of seafood gumbo with shrimp, crab and smoked sausage.

Freshly made angel biscuits are served at brunch, and side options include bacon-braised collard greens, stone-ground cheese grits, and mac and cheese.

"We draw not only from the area but also from the homes of the individuals that comprise the Citizen family," said Chef de Cuisine Noah Tomoko. "In the South, cooking begins with family, and our team brings influences from the Southeast, the Caribbean, and South America. We are fortunate to be able to pull from many sources to incorporate Southern-inspired dishes that will, we hope, make our guests feel at home."



The Citizen also features a raw bar serving oysters from a variety of East and West Coast farmers. "But the bay and gulf oysters coming into the restaurant from nearby providers, such as Florida Aquaculture Oysters, are by far the most popular with our guests and more than a few employees," Tomoko said.

citizenalys.com



Classic starter: Harbor Docks' Fried Green Tomatoes, a Southern favorite.

harbor docks

Harbor Docks has been a Destin tradition since 1979. It offers some of the closest Gulf-to-table cuisine available. Local fishermen bring their catch to the docks below the restaurant, where it is cleaned in their own wholesale market and then delivered right upstairs, where chefs prepare it for eager diners.

Harbor Docks also has quite a few southern-inspired dishes on the menu. "The biggest example is probably our blue plate specials at lunch," said owner Eddie Morgan. "There's nothing more Southern than a blue plate special." Offerings rotate each day of the week from pork chops, greens, and beans on Monday to fried chicken and Mac and cheese on Tuesdays and chicken pot pie and banana pudding every Thursday.

The regular menu also features shrimp and grits, fried green tomatoes, and several blackened fish preparations.

harbordocks.com





Southern staple: Great Southern Café's Pimento Cheese with warm pita wedges.



Signature dish: Great Southern Café's Grits Ya Ya with blackened shrimp and smoked Gouda grits.

the great southern cafe

The Great Southern Café has been a staple in Seaside, Florida, since 2006, when it opened its doors to a humble community still getting its legs. Today, Seaside is one of the more bustling areas along Scenic Highway 30A. Chef Jim Shirley has continued to offer what he calls new-fashioned Southern cuisine, and almost every menu item has been touched by the region's influence.

Shirley said he believes our histories are told through the food we cook and eat. His food tells his own story of traveling the world as a son of a Navy pilot, collecting global tastes along the way, combined with his love of the Southern food he learned to cook in the kitchen with his grandmothers.

A few highlights include their Soul Rolls, featuring chicken and collard greens in a crisp wrapper served with peach chutney, Creole mustard with horseradish and wasabi. Their pimento cheese is a Southern favorite as well served with warm pita wedges. (Tip from the pros: try it on an order of hush puppies. Yum!)

Shirley's shrimp and grits is one of the area's most celebrated dishes, featured in national magazines and even served at Florida Governor Ron DeSantis's inauguration in 2019. It features blackened Gulf shrimp with a saute of smoked bacon, spinach, cremini mushrooms, and cream on a bed of smoked Gouda cheese grits.

And if you are looking for some Southern fried chicken, Great Southern's take on the fried chicken sandwich is another great option. It features sweet tea-marinated thighs, candied bacon and jalapeño, fried green tomato, creole mayo, and crisp romaine on a warm bun.

thegreatsoutherncafe.com





Old Bay Steamer's signature steamer baskets, crab cakes, and baked oysters deliver a true Gulf Coast dining experience.

old bay steamer

For an authentic Gulf Coast seafood experience, Old Bay Steamer in Fort Walton Beach is a must-visit. Known for its no-frills, high-quality seafood, this local favorite has been serving up fresh dishes for years. The restaurant's hearty steamer baskets—filled with snow crab, lobster, shrimp, oysters, mussels, and clams—are perfectly steamed to preserve their natural flavors.

Beyond the steamer baskets, Old Bay Steamer offers Southern-inspired favorites like fall-off-the-bone barbecue ribs with classic sides of corn on the cob and new potatoes. Seafood lovers will also enjoy the jumbo shrimp cocktail and baked oysters.

With its casual, family-friendly atmosphere and commitment to fresh, simple flavors, Old Bay Steamer delivers the essence of Gulf Coast dining in every bite.

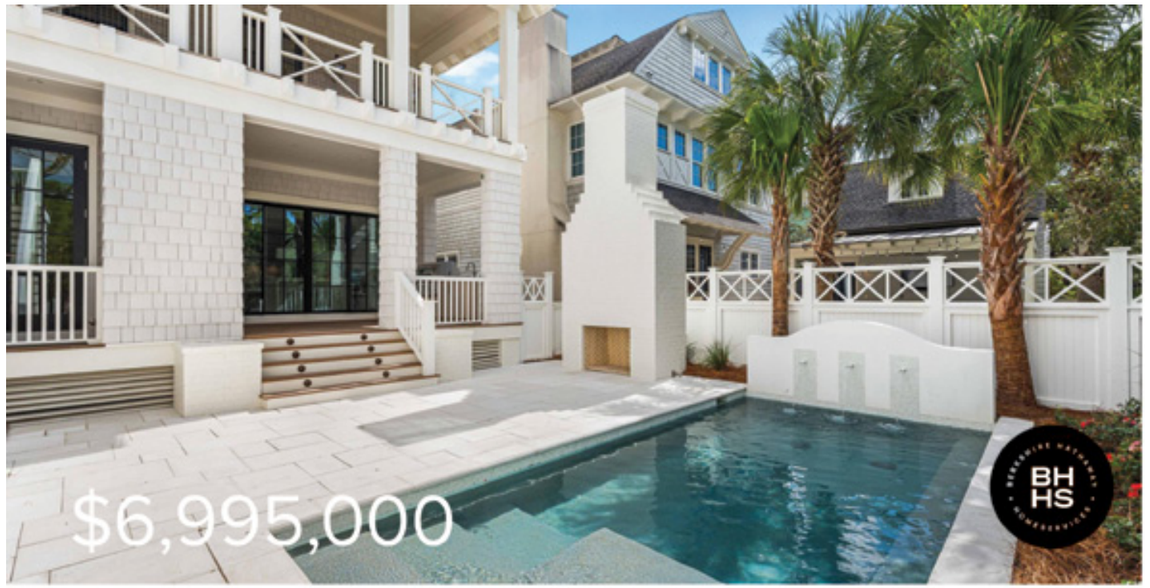
oldbaysteamerfwb.com

From Panama City Beach to Fort Walton Beach, Northwest Florida offers a taste of the South like no other. Whether you're craving shrimp and grits, fried green tomatoes, or inventive coastal creations, these handpicked restaurants offer a delicious taste of Southern hospitality along Florida's Emerald Coast.

Happiness Starts Within,

But a Beach House Sure Helps.

8 of Our Favorite Beach Homes on the Market Along Scenic Highway 30A



114 Coopersmith Lane
Watersound, FL

6 BED | 6/2 BATH | 4,501 SQ. FT.

Embrace a life of casual elegance at this stunning new construction home in the community of WaterSound Beach. Spanning an impressive 4,501 square feet, this stately residence encompasses an expansive primary home, carriage house, 2-car garage, Gulf view tower, and a private pool with outdoor powder bath and shower.

LISTED BY ANNE WINICKI



2940 E County Hwy 30A
Seagrove Beach, FL

4 BED | 4.5 BATH | 4,276 SQ. FT.

This impeccable gulf front property presents an opportunity to own an authentic piece of 30A with 60' of gulf frontage resting on a 32' bluff overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. Designed by Thurber Architects, this retreat offers uniquely designed living spaces that feature all the luxuries of home and so much more!

LISTED BY DELAWALLA GROUP



245 Log Landing Street in the family favorite community of Watersound Origins is the perfect combination of space, privacy, and elegance. Tucked away on one of the largest lots in the community at 0.29 acres, the whole family has plenty of space for summer fun, cookouts, the kids playhouse, and more.

LISTED BY LUCAS GOUGH

245 Log Landing Street
Watersound, FL

4 BED | 3.5 BATH | 2,423 SQ. FT.



This charming beach house in the gated community of Sunrise Beach is just moments away from 30A's Emerald Shores! Enjoy beautiful beach views and the sound of waves from all three levels of private balconies or relax by the large heated pool. The newly updated open floor plan welcomes you with generous living and dining space made for entertaining.

LISTED BY NOAH ESCOBAR

160 Seaward Drive
Santa Rosa Beach, FL

3 BED | 3 BATH | 1,906 SQ. FT.



334 Seabreeze Boulevard
Inlet Beach, FL

5 BED | 4.5 BATH | 2,522 SQ. FT.

Escape to your own slice of paradise in this stunning tropical beach house retreat in Inlet Beach. Whether you're looking for a year-round residence or a vacation getaway, this fully furnished home with deeded beach access offers the ideal coastal lifestyle for the entire family to enjoy.

LISTED BY LORI ROLAND



11 Sugar Sand Lane
Seagrove, FL

5 BED | 6.5 BATH | 3,785 SQ. FT.

Introducing a stunning new construction home with panoramic Gulf views, only moments from Seaside, Greenway Station, The Hub and the newest Regional Beach access. With a private pool, elevator, 3,785 sqft of conditioned space plus 1,024 sqft of balcony space, this home invites you to savor outdoor living while soaking in the breathtaking views.

LISTED BY OLIVER ROBBINS



With anticipated completion in spring 2025, six elegant Cottage Grove townhomes crafted by Key Lime Construction sit only 1.3 miles from the beautiful beaches, restaurants, and shopping of 30A. Exterior renderings detail the pavered road and driveways, one car garages, fiber board siding with brick accents, gas lanterns, coastal colors, and landscaping.

LISTED BY CORINNE WALSH

624 S Co Hwy 393
Santa Rosa Beach, FL

3 BED | 3.5 BATH | 1,640 SQ. FT.



Discover the Clearwater, perfectly positioned just moments away from NatureWalk at Watersound Origins amenities. Enjoy modern luxury with durable vinyl plank flooring, quartz contertops, and more. Designed for full-time living, this bright and airy home stands apart with its prime location and thoughtful details.

LISTED BY MARC FRIEDMAN

192 Ravine Road
Watersound, FL

2 BED | 2 BATH | 1,849 SQ. FT.



14 Atwoods Lane
Rosemary Beach, FL

3 BED | 3.5 BATH | 2,156 SQ. FT.

One lot off the gulf on the peaceful eastern side of Rosemary Beach you'll find this exquisite coastal gem. This home was meticulously crafted by builder Chris Ritchie, and then renovated by acclaimed architect Darrell Russell, harmonizing its classic charm with modern luxury.

LISTED BY GREG ALSOBROOK



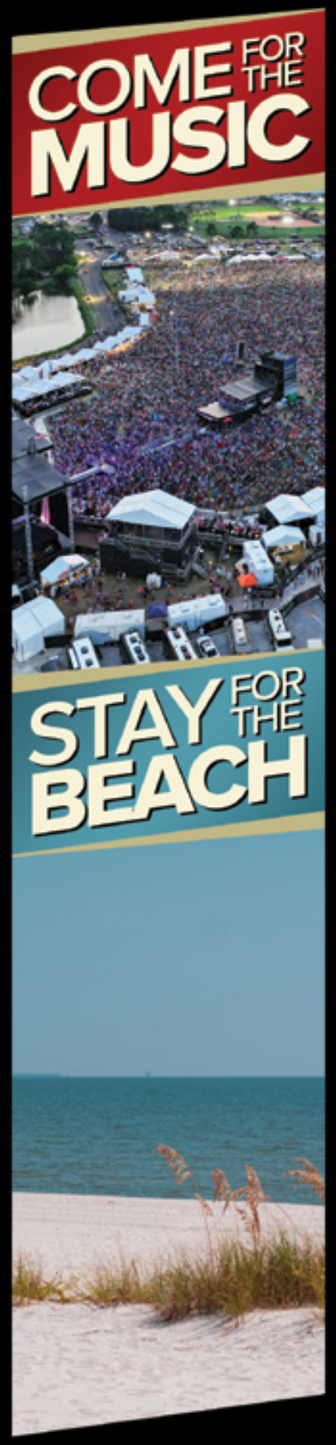
40 S Somerset Street
Alys Beach, FL

4 BED | 4/3 BATH | 4,743 SQ. FT.

Somersisle Terrace occupies a prominent place between the retail and resort offerings of Alys Beach. Modeled after the grand Terrace Rows of Georgian London, rising four stories above an elevated stoop and landscaped dooryard. Four bedroom suites are distributed on three floors, while a fourth-floor terrace forms an outdoor living room and alfresco dining.

LISTED BY ALYS BEACH SALES TEAM







30A

WHAT'S 30A?

30A® is the #1 Guide to Florida's Scenic Highway 30A. Every day, 30A shares Beach Happy® stories and eco-conscious products with 30A's 1.7 million followers on Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, and TikTok. 30A has raised $3.2 million for coastal charities, has given away 4.5 million of its famous blue 30A stickers, and has prevented 6.5 million plastic bottles from going into our oceans and landfills through 30A's line of recycled apparel.

30A LICENSING PARTNERS

Beach Happy Cafe in WaterColor, Florida
30A Apparel by B-Unlimited
30A Retail Stores by B-Unlimited
30A Craft Beer by Grayton Beer
30A Wine by Superb Wines
30A Electric Bikes by YOLO Board + Bike
30A Coffee by Amavida
30A Artisan Hard Seltzers
SALTIE by 30A Premium Haircare
30A Candles by Postcards
30A Rentals by Stay Sense

30A MEDIA

30A.com
Beach Happy Magazine
30A Charity License Plates
30Arealestate.com
30Arentals.com
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Sean Dietrich, nicknamed Sean of the South, chronicles life in the American South. Find him online at seandietrich.com.

Sunshine

By Sean Dietrich

Gray weather feels a lot like taking a field trip to Hell. I don't like overcast days. Whenever the sky gets like this, I sit by a windowsill and entertain the idea of composing Russian poetry.

I love the sun. I need the sun. When it disappears, I start to miss the sun in much the same way I would miss trees, grass, or ice cream, if those things were to vanish behind clouds.

I wouldn't want to lose those things. Just like I wouldn't want to lose muddy creeks and rivers, or largemouth bass. Or sausages from Conecuh County, biscuits made by hand, macaroni and cheese, and barbecued ribs.

As it happens, I hold a longstanding county-fair record for eating the most consecutive ribs without being admitted to the ER. I'll show you my trophy sometime—if ever these godawful clouds go away.

I wouldn't want to lose kids, either. If clouds covered all the kids up in the world, I'd miss them.

Especially babies. Fat ones that wiggle when they laugh in your arms, flexing their little stomachs as they cackle, their plastic Huggies getting heavier with each laugh.

I love children. They remind me of who I truly am inside. I am not an adult. Not really. I am really just a tall kid with a mortgage. All attempts to appear otherwise are fruitless.

And since I'm giving big fat opinions, here's another: I wish pop singers would quit dressing like giant marital aids. Don't they know kids watch them on television? Don't they know there's more to music than The Carnal Urge? Do they even know what real music is?

Consequently, why is crappy music so popular? Why are pop artists with the collective IQ of room-temperature mayonnaise famous?

I realize this is not a new problem. Idiocy has always been in fashion. Each generation in history had pop stars and musicians who drove that generation's parents completely bat-excrement crazy.

But frankly, I think we all owe Elvis an apology. He might have shaken his pelvis on national TV, but at least he didn't take it out and show it to anybody.

You want to know what real music is? I'll tell you. Go visit a classroom full of 5-year-olds singing, "Zacchaeus Was A Wee Little Man." Or "This Little Light Of Mine." You'll hear all the real music you can stand.

I've never smiled as big as I did when I taught Sunday school, watching 24 kids shatter lightbulbs using only voices.

Although my class rarely completed any actual lesson-work because students kept raising hands and expressing a violent need to use the bathroom inasmuch as their parents evidently fed them a steady diet of prunes and Raisin Bran.

We used to sing like them, you and I.

I'm glad we were children once, before the gray clouds of adulthood came. Because in those days, we were naive enough to be singers, finger-painters, and storytellers.

We had small vocabularies, yes. But we knew all the important words. And we weren't too proud to say them, the way adults are.

"I love you, Mom." "Thank you." "I need help." "Will you hold me?" "I'm scared."

Sometimes I wish we had small hands and stinky feet again. I wish we were curious, easily excitable, and too distracted to be sad.

I wish we all laughed so hard we were in danger of public urination. I wish we all hugged more than we do now. I wish we could find a way to be children again.

But most of all, I wish these clouds would go away and the sun would come out.

Drive Change with the 30A Charity License Plate

Support Scenic Walton's $100,000 goal for 2025 and help create a brighter, more beautiful Walton County—one license plate at a time.

The 30A Company is kicking off 2025 with an ambitious new campaign aimed at supporting Scenic Walton, a local non-profit dedicated to preserving and enhancing the beauty, safety, and infrastructure of Walton County. The goal? Raise $100,000 for Scenic Walton by encouraging locals and visitors alike to purchase the State of Florida's official Scenic Walton / 30A Charity License Plate.

The goal builds upon the incredible success of the partnership so far, which has already generated over $84,000 for Scenic Walton, a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in Walton County.

By purchasing a 30A Charity License Plate, residents and visitors can directly support Scenic Walton's mission to beautify and improve Walton County. From landscaping roadway medians to expanding pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and promoting underground utilities, the projects funded by Scenic Walton make a tangible impact across the entire community.

Join the Mission

This year, The 30A Company is calling on everyone who loves 30A to help reach the $100,000 goal. By purchasing a 30A Charity License Plate, you're not just showing off your support for this iconic destination—you're contributing to a brighter, cleaner, and more connected Walton County. Every plate sold brings Scenic Walton one step closer to realizing its vision for a safer and more beautiful community.

Ready to make a difference? Visit your local Florida Tax Collector's Office or order your 30A Charity License Plate online at scenic.org/chapter/scenic-walton.

SCENIC WALTON

PHOTO: GUILLAUME LECHAT

THE BEACH TOWNS OF 30A

This is a map of our little beach community. Old Florida "State Road 30" once started at the Alabama state line and meandered 283 miles east across the panhandle. Several "alternate routes" (hence the "A" in 30A) offered drivers a slower scenic option, usually along the beach. But we don't think of 30A as disjointed miles of soulless asphalt. 30A® is a celebration of small town beach life – the kind that's been enjoyed by families for decades all along the Gulf Coast. 30A isn't just a line on the map. It's a lifestyle; an attitude. It's that happy place we all dream of when we need to unwind, unplug and celebrate life. – 30A.com





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