



AllWays Traveller

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Alabama

[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)

# Everything in the outdoors on the Gulf

**Alabama lies at the heart of the American Deep South and is bordered by Tennessee to the north, Georgia to the east, Florida and the Gulf of Mexico to the south and Mississippi to the west.**

It is a state rich in the heritage of the American Civil War and civil rights and a welcome for travellers based on the friendliest folk you will find anywhere, fine food and foot stomping music.

While the cities of Montgomery and Birmingham are a 2.5 hour drive from Atlanta, the coastal areas of Mobile and the beaches in Gulf Shore and Orange Beach are three hours from New Orleans.

The rural northern part of the state, which takes in the small cities of Florence/Muscle Shoals the larger Huntsville and the DeSoto State Park are under two hours drive from Nashville and Chattanooga, Tennessee.

This *AllWays traveller* - one of five in the Alabama series - takes a look at Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, the State's relatively short but stunning stretch of coastline.

**Ashley Gibbins**

Managing editor  
*AllWays traveller*



## Thirty-two miles of rest and relaxation



The Gulf, Perdido Beach Blvd

By Ashley Gibbins

**Head for as down the State Alabama as is possible to go and you hit the Gulf of Mexico - and where Alabama meets Florida.**

There ain't no going any further.

But when you get to the Gulf Shores and Orange Beach there is no need to.

This area takes in the cities of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach and while gulf shores is an app description of the one, Orange Beach misrepresents the other.

### A golden white beach

The beach here is golden white - all 32 miles of it.

Back in 2010 there were real fears that the BP oil spill would leave a lasting, greasy, legacy in the area.

Luckily, this is not so.

The beaches, and the Gulf waters that crash upon them are clean and crystal clear.

Thank goodness for this because the economy in this area is based predominantly on tourism.



Perdido Beach Boulevard, runs almost the length of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, and it is here you will find a string of high end, high rise, hotels and apartments.

And almost all with direct access to the beach.

The Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo



The Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo opened in 1989, as Zooland Animal Park, by Joey Ward.

In the following five years the Ward family gave the 30 acres that makes up the zoo park today.

Wide pathways throughout the park offer close up views of over 500 exotic animals including: lions, tigers, bears, primates, leopards and wolves.

There is also a reptile house, petting zoo, and aviary.

[www.alabamagulfcoastzoo.org](http://www.alabamagulfcoastzoo.org)

The Wharf



The Amphitheater (Highslide JS)

The Wharf is Orange Beach's main entertainment destination with a mix of music, locally-owned boutiques and casual and fine dining.

There is a 112 foot tall Ferris wheel, the SPECTRA light and sound show, and a marina.

The *Amphitheater at the Wharf* is a major outdoor concert venue hosting top musical acts.

[www.alwharf.com](http://www.alwharf.com)

## A place for rest and relaxation – with just a little adventure thrown in



This really is the place for rest and relaxation, interspersed with a little more active exercise.

And almost all of it in the outdoors.

**Let's start with the beach - everyone does.**



This really is a stunning expanse of sand.

My favourite time on the beach is when the sun has gone down.

Those sun seekers have gone and there is a peaceful serenity in strolling through the still warm waters as darkness slowly falls.

### **Onto the water**

Leaving the beach, to go onto the water, there is the chance to charter a boat and crew for some big fishing out in the Gulf.

Or maybe a couple of hours on a family fishing expedition.

### **Hook 'em and 'cook em**

Many of the restaurants in the area offer *hook 'em and 'cook 'em*, where they will take your catch of the day and prepare you a delicious dinner with it.

Also on the water, there are sunset dinner and dolphin watching cruises.

Golf Shores and Orange Beach is also running one of the USA's largest artificial reef programmes.

This has involved sinking a freighter, the LuLu, which is becoming a prime diving site.

### **Back on dry land**



On dry land this area is a prime golfing destination with nine championship level courses.

[www.gulfshores.com/golf](http://www.gulfshores.com/golf)

Finally the Gulf State Park offers hiking and cycle trails, kayaking and paddle boarding on its lake and a new zip lining attraction.



## Waterville USA



Waterville USA is a 20 acre water park and amusement park located close to the beach.

It originally opened in 1986 and has since added over \$10 million in new or replaced attractions and water rides.

[www.watervilleusa.com](http://www.watervilleusa.com)

### **Fort Morgan**

Fort Morgan is a historic masonry star fort at the mouth of Mobile Bay and is seen as one of the finest examples of military architecture.

The post was named in honour of Revolutionary War hero Daniel Morgan.

It was built after the war of 1812 to protect the shipping channels of Mobile Bay and the port of Mobile, and played a key role in the Battle of Mobile Bay, during the American Civil War

The Alabama Historical Commission maintains the site, which is open to the public.

[www.fortmorgan.org](http://www.fortmorgan.org)

## Gulf Shores and Orange Beach is the place to get great seafood straight off the boat

The restaurants here will serve your seafood fried, grilled, baked, broiled, blackened, steamed, nude or stewed.

You can also try it in gumbo or on a po'boy, dressed or undressed, to your liking.

There's also no shortage of diners offering steaks, burgers and sandwiches and a range of international cuisine.

### The Gulf, Orange Beach

Determined to dine alfresco we found *The Gulf* on Perdido Beach Boulevard a tremendous, casual dining place frequented by locals and visitors alike.

This waterfront diner is made out of shipping containers that were surplus to requirements when the oil slick clean up was completed.



The Gulf serves up great burgers and sandwiches and fresh fish dishes.

[www.facebook.com/thegulfal](http://www.facebook.com/thegulfal)

## The Bon Secour is a real safe haven



The Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge contains 7,000 acres of wildlife habitat for migratory birds, nesting sea turtles and the endangered Alabama beach mouse.

The refuge was established by Congress in 1980 to preserve the coastal dunes, protect threatened species, provide recreational use, and serve as a living laboratory for students and scientists.

The name Bon Secour comes from the French meaning "safe harbor", which is very apt for a sanctuary for native flora and fauna that the refuge provides.

The refuge is also one of the largest undeveloped parcels of land on the Alabama coast with its dunes a reminder of the Gulf Coast as it once was.

The Refuge's beaches serve as nesting sites for loggerhead, and Kemp's Ridley sea turtles.

More than 370 species of birds have been identified on the refuge during migratory seasons. The largest are usually ospreys and several species of herons.

Seven species of hummingbirds have also been identified and red fox, coyotes, and armadillos also live there.

[www.fws.gov/bonsecour](http://www.fws.gov/bonsecour)

## The Adventure Center at Gulf State Park



The Adventure Center at Gulf State Park is one of the area's most popular attractions.

The Center's zipline adventure comprises seven towers and six ziplines over the length of one mile, with four over the waters of Lake Shelby.

It also provides a great vantage point for taking in spectacular views of the Gulf State Park.

Kayak and paddleboard rentals are available also.

### Gulf State Park



The 6,150 acre Gulf State Park itself comprises 2.5 miles of beach, three fresh water lakes, a scenic nature trail, a beach pavilion, picnic area, campground, cabins/cottages and golf course.

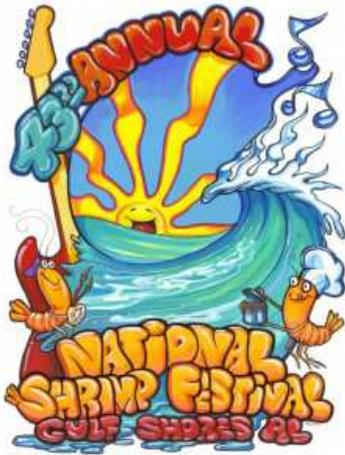
[www.gulfadventurecenter.com](http://www.gulfadventurecenter.com)  
[www.alapark.com/gulf-state-park](http://www.alapark.com/gulf-state-park)

# Festivals and events galore



The weather and laid-back ambience of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach is so well suited to a string of annual festivals including :

## The National Shrimp Festival



The National Shrimp Festival is held on the beach each year during the second full weekend in October.

This free festival attracts 250,000 people and features over 300 vendors in an outdoor village.

Two stages offer live music entertainment during the day and well into the evening with a wide variety of acts from country and Motown to Cajun and rock-n-roll.

Shrimp and other seafood delicacies feature along with the usual festival fare.

Restaurants get into the swing of things during September by competing to prepare the best shrimp dish.

To do so the dishes have to feature Alabama Wild Shrimp.

[www.myshrimpfest.com](http://www.myshrimpfest.com)

## The Hangout Music Festival

The Hangout Music Festival is an annual three-day music festival held at the public beaches of Gulf Shores, Alabama.

This is a multi-genre musical event that embraces rock, indie, hip hop, and electronic dance music.

The festival generally takes place on the third weekend in May.



Acts that have performed at Hangout Fest include the *Foo Fighters*, *Paul Simon*, the *Red Hot Chili Peppers*, *Kings of Leon*, *Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers* and *Stevie Wonder*.

[www.hangoutmusicfest.com](http://www.hangoutmusicfest.com)

## The Frank Brown International Songwriters Festival



This festival held each November is dedicated to the late Frank Brown, who was night watchman at the *Flora~Bama* for 28 years, and who was 91 years old when he retired.

It is one of the oldest and largest songwriters festival in the world.

[www.frankbrownsongwriters.com](http://www.frankbrownsongwriters.com)

## Flora-Bama



Flora-Bama, which is located on Perdido Key, adjacent the Alabama/Florida state line, is a hugely popular honky-tonk, oyster bar, beach bar, and Gulf Coast cultural landmark.

The Flora-Bama Lounge has live music 365 days a year and hosts a range of annual events including the *World Famous Annual Interstate Mullet Toss* (the last weekend in April) where competitors on the beach throw a mullet (fish) from a 10 foot circle in Florida across the state line into Alabama.

Other events based around the bar are the Super Bowl Chili Cook-off, Shindig on the Sand, Flora-Bama Fishing Rodeo, bikini contests and The Frank Brown International Songwriters Festival.



[www.florabama.com](http://www.florabama.com)

More information on Gulf Shores and Orange Beach



[www.gulfshores.com](http://www.gulfshores.com)  
[www.alabama.travel](http://www.alabama.travel)

## The Perdido Beach Resort : [www.perdidobeachresort.com](http://www.perdidobeachresort.com)



By Ann Mealor

**The beaches on the Gulf of Mexico are a firm favourite of mine, and I was looking forward to spending a few days strolling along water's edge and paddling in the warm and gentle sea.**

The Perdido Beach Resort could not be better located for what I wanted to do.

Situated directly on the Gulf of Mexico in Orange Beach, the resort is near Alabama Point.

This is known locally as "The Pass", where the Intracoastal Waterway meets the deep waters of the Gulf.

The boats that sail along the Pass can be viewed from many of the hotel's 346 comfortable guestrooms.

Our room was modern and spacious, decorated in green and whites with mahogany wood furnishings.

We had a small private balcony on which to enjoy the glorious view, a welcome fridge for storing our own wine and beers and complimentary internet access which is always a boon.

The Perdido Beach Resort has everything that you would expect from Alabama's only full service beachfront hotel resort.

There are six bars and restaurants including the award-winning *Voyagers* for fine dining and *Latitude 30* for more casual family fare.

The Lobby Lounge has live music and comfy sofas and is a great place to relax after a day on the beach or lounging around the pool.



Activities for the more energetic include tennis and beach volleyball and a fully equipped gym will help work off any extra calories.

Staff are attentive, helpful and well trained.

The concierge is very knowledgeable and can recommend and arrange a number of activities such as golf, deep sea fishing or parasailing.

### **The beach makes it special**

However, what makes this place special is the beach.

Just a short stroll past the pool and you are there on the Gulf's white-washed sand with its wonderful wildlife with pelicans diving and skimming across the water.



Blue herons, still as statues, wait for a tasty morsel, while sand dippers scurry along the shore and tiny fish dart about your ankles.

Generations of families return here year and after year to enjoy the views, the beach and, of course, to relax, be pampered and just to get away from it all.

A snapshot of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Alabama



Distinction Charters



Grab your keys. It's time to take an Alabama road trip.

This *AllWays traveller to Gulf Shores and Orange Beach*, is one of five *AllWays traveller* features in the Alabama series. The others are :



Birmingham



Montgomery



Mobile Bay



North Alabama

To download these visit : [www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)

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[www.allwaystraveller.com](http://www.allwaystraveller.com)



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[www.itwalliance.com](http://www.itwalliance.com)

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