



AllWays Traveller

Clearwater Beach, Florida

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

# A sunshine destination in its own right

**Clearwater Beach is located on a barrier island on the Gulf of Mexico in west central Florida.**

The white sand beach, which stretches for 2.5 miles along the Gulf, is supported by what USA Today readers deemed to be Florida's Best Beach Town 2013.

The area, which was once a convenient second destination for visiting the theme parks of Orlando, has witnessed a genuine renaissance in recent years.

The city's 'Beach by Design' improvement project has seen the sea front around Pier 60 greatly enhanced by the creation of the Beach Walk promenade.

And while the regeneration of Clearwater Beach continues, the best of the traditional and iconic beach style bars and diners remain.

But they are now complimented by the new Hyatt Regency Clearwater Beach Resort, the area's flagship hotel and one that epitomises the confidence with which this destination is moving into the 21 century tourism market.

## Ashley Gibbins

Managing editor  
**AllWays traveller**

Images provided by visitors to Clearwater Beach, via [www.clearwaterbeach.com](http://www.clearwaterbeach.com), are credited.





The Clearwater's Dolphin Trail



Clearwater's Dolphins Trail is an artistic initiative featuring a growing pod of more than 101 6-foot tall fiberglass dolphins, each individually designed by a local artist and sponsored by an area business.

[www.visitclearwaterflorida.com/dolphintrail](http://www.visitclearwaterflorida.com/dolphintrail)

Caladesi Island



Caladesi Island State Park, just north of Clearwater Beach, is one of the last remaining un-touched natural islands in Florida, looking just as it did a hundred years ago.

The park is accessible on foot during low tide and by boat at other times.

Caladesi is home to a three mile long trail in the shade of tangling mangroves and provides a glimpse into Florida's natural rustic beauty.

There's also kayaking through the mangroves.

Clearwater now has its future in its own hands

By Ashley Gibbins

**Clearwater Beach was one of those destinations that I was a little unsure of before visiting.**

Okay this is Florida so the weather is normally going to be great.

And being on the Gulf of Mexico the sand, sea and sunsets will be spectacular.

But my perception of Clearwater Beach was maybe of a place a little beyond its sell by date.

Clearwater tended to be the place sandwiched between trips to the Disney theme parks.

It didn't really matter where it was, as long as it was close to Orlando, and had a beach to crash out on.

But, of course, the theme parks in Orlando have mushroomed, and water parks like *Blizzard Beach* and *Typhoon Lagoon* meet the need for spells of rest and relaxation.

As a result Clearwater Beach tended to drop off the radar.

Making my first trip there in 2013, I was prepared to be disappointed.

But not a bit of it.

## On the up and up



While Clearwater Beach, by all accounts, did suffer a bit a dip, it is coming back stronger than ever - and on its own terms.

The beach area has been greatly enhanced by the new Beach Walk promenade.

As for dining options, the city's beach bars offer lively, colourful places to eat and drink.

That's colourful in the ramshackle decor and in the characters you are sure to get to know.

When to get to Crabby's (my quickly established local) is the easy bit - happy hour - it's having the strength to drag oneself away that's the challenge.

Talking 'sport' provides a passport with American football, baseball, basketball, golf and ice hockey. Ok, European football less so.

And rugby, a real no go. Well no place is perfect.

And finally we come back, as one invariably does, to Florida's glorious sub-tropical climate.

Except for the height of summer, when it can be on the very hot side, the sunshine state is a year-round location.



Jillenne Landry

It is, very much, a deserving destination in its own right.

In contrast to eating on a bar stool, there are also a range of fine dining options including *Shor*, at the Hyatt, where we had a tremendous dinner.



### Touring the area

Clearwater Beach is also a great place for touring what is a fascinating part of Florida.

While we did not get there, you should visit the 'Scottish' town of Dunedan and 'Greek' Tarpon Springs, the sponge capital.

Cycle and walking trails start at the city limits and there are fishing, dolphin watch and sunset cruises from the marina.

I confess I came to Clearwater Beach with a certain sense of trepidation.

I left vowing to return in order chart its next hey-day.

Clearwater Beach no longer has to 'feed off the scraps' of the Disney tourist trade.

## Clearwater Marine Aquarium



The Clearwater Marine Aquarium is nationally recognised for its work in marine rescue, rehabilitation and release, as well as education and animal assisted therapy research.

More than an aquarium, the CMA is also a non-profit organization working to conserve aquatic environments and animals.

Their most famous resident, Winter the Dolphin, was caught in a crab trap and nursed back to health after she lost her tail.

She was fitted with a prosthetic tail to allow her to swim once again, and Winter's story of survival and perseverance has been inspiring children, especially those with disabilities, around the world.

Winter's life has been the focus of the 3D Warner Brothers' film *Dolphin Tale*, filmed entirely on location in Clearwater.

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

### Pinellas Trail

The Pinellas Trail is a linear park and recreation trail that is open to active people of all ages and skill levels.

It has recently been remapped and improved to provide an easily accessible place for people to enjoy.

### Captain Memo's Pirate Cruise

Captain Memo's Pirate Cruise is a child-friendly, the two hour cruise features treasure hunts, face-painting, water games, and lots of dancing to reggae island tunes and steel drums.

Adults are invited to enjoy a beverage while their children are safely entertained by the crew.

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



### Hyatt Regency Clearwater Beach Resort and Spa

By Ann Mealar

**I wasn't quite sure what to expect from Clearwater Beach, and had visions of it being a rather tired and worn-out seaside town.**

However, despite the drizzling rain and dull skies on our arrival, I couldn't have been more wrong!

Clearwater Beach is wide, clean and inviting.

The paved promenade winds along the perimeter and is lined with an excellent array of traditional and casual American diners and quality hotels.

#### Pride of place

Standing tall and taking pride of place amongst them is the grand, three year old, Hyatt Regency.

We were swiftly and courteously checked in – all Hyatt staff are expertly trained – and shown to our room, which was stunning.

A two bedroom suite, beautifully furnished in a West Indies-inspired style, with a kitchen, dining and lounge area with large, comfy sofas.

Recycling bins are in all rooms and unwanted soap and shampoo are sent to third world countries through *Clean the World*.

The kingsize beds were extremely comfortable and bathrooms spacious with quality toiletries and bathrobes – always a welcome touch.

But best of all was the balcony, with tables, chairs and a great view across the Gulf of Mexico.



#### A fine dining restaurant

And our dinner at *SHOR* American Seafood Grill was a real highlight of the stay.

First was the taste tingling hot pretzel bread with mustard and butter.

We then had the award winning crabcakes which were delicious – not too big and very nicely presented, and the calamari steak, cut into strips, soaked in buttermilk and fried in a light, tempura batter – delicious.

It was then the specialities of house, which were lobster ravioli with a vermouth cream and, for Ashley, the chili lime mahi mahi with coconut jasmine rice and a tropical fruit salsa.

Both lived up to expectations.

The meal was complemented by a delicious sauvignon blanc from the Napa valley and rounded off with selection of light, but delightful desserts, the favourite being the coconut flan.

With its relaxing spa, fine dining restaurant, cocktail bar, bustling coffee shop (I had the best coffee here), elegant pool deck, local restaurants and Clearwater Beach itself, there is no reason to travel far from the Hyatt Regency.



[www.clearwaterbeach.hyatt.com](http://www.clearwaterbeach.hyatt.com)

A snapshot of Clearwater Beach



Mike Edeards



Mike



Mike Ignash



Shane Carlson



Mike Genay

## AllWays consider :

### Doing the airport in style – using the executive lounge



**How often have you heard it said that it is the airport that is the worst part of flying.**

The time it takes to get through security, the panic at the thought of checking in late and missing the flight and then the wait in crowded departure areas.

So is the best approach to spend as little time there as possible?

No. To avoid the stress and pressure of flying, get to the airport three hours earlier than necessary, check in and clear security in a leisurely 'no sweat' fashion and then head to one of the airport lounges to relax or work in style.



This costs a little more but, with all that lounges offer to make guests comfortable, it is money very well spent .



Comfortable chairs and a good view of the aircraft; Wi-Fi access and power points; a complimentary choice of hot and soft drinks and a selection of fine food and a wide range of newspapers and magazines (for reading there and on the plane).



This makes the airport experience a pleasure rather than a pain.



**Nº1 TRAVELLER**

Passengers flying out of London (as I tend to do) should opt for the premium lounges by *No.1 Traveller*.

*No.1 Traveller* offers 'pay-as-you-go' airport lounges at Heathrow Terminal 3, Gatwick North and South Terminals, Stansted and also at Birmingham.

In addition to its premium lounges, *No.1 Traveller* also offers chauffeur-driven airport transfers to provide a 'driveway to runway' service, as well as travel spas and bedrooms.

You can then look forward to enjoying the flight in a fit state.



[www.No1Traveller.com](http://www.No1Traveller.com)

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The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

**Ashley Gibbins**

Ashley Gibbins is Chief Executive of the International Travel Writers Alliance and Managing Editor of *AllWays traveller*

## Ashley Gibbins



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