



March 4, 2010

## Getaway: Beach tripping in Destin

by *Cheré Coen*

With the hint of spring in the air, it's time to discuss spring break destinations.

If parking the car and giving in to Florida sunshine and fun is your idea of a vacation, consider Sandestin Gulf and Beach Resort, just a hop and a jump east of Destin.

This all-inclusive resort spans 2,400 acres, a combination of 30 neighborhoods of condominiums, villas, townhouses and hotel accommodations which offer a wide range in rental prices, plus four championship golf courses, 15 tennis courts of both clay and hard surfaces, a 98-slip marina, fitness center and spa and a village of boutiques, restaurants, nightlife venues and more at the Village of Baytowne Wharf.

Included in the daily price of accommodations is the use of the fitness center and four pools (plus neighborhood pools depending on where you stay), two bicycles for four hours (and you will want to take advantage since the property is so large), one hour of boogie board, kayak and/or canoe use and an hour of tennis court time. Children's activities and admission to family events may also be free, in addition to the putting green, but families can also enjoy pottery painting, kids golf clinics and parents night out.

"Once you park your car, you don't have to leave," said Erin Kelly, concierge director.

In addition to the free use of bicycles, shuttles run regularly to transport visitors from their accommodations to any corner of the property. Visitors enjoying the hotel-style rooms at Bayside Inn or the units at the Grand Sandestin, both fronting the Choctawhatchee Bay, may use the shuttle to travel to the sugar sand beaches of the Gulf. Those enjoying the beachside accommodations may shuttle to the Village of Baytowne Wharf for shopping, fish tacos and margaritas at Cabos Paradise Grill, zip lining and live blues at Graffiti and the Funky Blues Shack. And the Village's free Wednesday night concert series begins this month.

Once the water heats up bayside, the resort offers sailboats, kayaks, canoes, wave runners and paddles boards. There's an eco wave runner tour with chances to see dolphins and manatees, Kelly said, and dinner cruises to enjoy the Florida sunsets over water.

Hikers, bikers and runners can enjoy traversing the sidewalks of the extensive property, including the 1/4-mile nature trail, the mile-long perimeter trail at Jolee Island extending over a salt marsh and the numerous ponds dotting the golf courses where a variety of wildlife can be found. Picnic tables and grills make many of these spots great places to enjoy a meal and relax or watch the sun set.

Restaurants range from the village's many offerings, from the fun Hartell's Village Diner with luscious burgers and shakes to the New Orleans atmosphere of Acme Oyster House and fresh sushi overlooking the lagoon at Osaka Sushi Rocks. Fine dining can also be found on the beach at Finz Beachside Grille, which serves up casual sandwiches to elegant fresh seafood and steaks. Be sure and sample their warm cinnamon churros with a chocolate Grand Marnier truffle dipping sauce, a fabulous take on the

traditional Mexican dessert.

From now until May 26, visitors to Sandestin will receive the fourth night free after booking three nights. In addition to spring break events, the resort will play host to the Sandestin Wine Festival April 23-25 with seminars, wine tastings and a culinary pavilion.

For other discount packages and to view a calendar of events, go to [www.sandestin.com](http://www.sandestin.com).

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