

# 5 Florida Destinations to Help You Escape the Snow

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3 January 2013



Snow, slush, cold. Yes, it's January, and that means time to escape the chill of Canada and head south! Here are five sun-filled spots worth the drive (or flight) to Florida.



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Florida has been a Mecca of vacations for many, many years. Who among us has not driven for many hours in a car packed with relatives to a beach house where you proceed to consume your weight in freshly-caught shrimp and spend hours every day trying to remove sand from every crevice in your body as well as from the floor mats in your car?

Here are 5 destinations that make that weight gain and stubborn sand worth the drive.

## 1. Destin

Located on the gorgeous Gulf of Mexico—which has colours reminiscent of the Caribbean and sugar-white sand beaches—Destin is more like an island paradise than a city in Florida. There are lovely boutique hotels such as the [Henderson Park Inn](#), as well as sprawling resorts with shops, restaurants and plenty of accommodation choices, like the [Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort](#). Add in plenty of beach houses available for rent, and you have a location perfect for families.

Spend that inevitable rainy day at the Silver Sands outlet mall, where you are sure to find the perfect item for every member of the family. Grab lunch at [Cheeseburger in Paradise](#); I recommend the fish tacos! Then try dinner at [Fudpuckers](#) and let the kids feed the alligators in their private lagoon.



## 2. Amelia Island

Located on the Atlantic side of Florida, this picturesque and historic barrier island is a great place for a romantic getaway. Check out the [Hampton Inn and Suites Harborfront](#) for lovely suites with a view and full kitchen, located within easy walking distance of the brick-paved streets of the quaint shopping district.

For a truly luxurious stay, try the [Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort](#). With a private beach, spectacular golf course and several dining choices right on the grounds, this is a great choice for a getaway.

Shop for some wonderful and reasonably priced costume jewelry at the [Twisted Sisters](#) shop and have dinner at [Sandy Bottoms](#) right on the beach.



## 3. Navarre Beach

Located on Santa Rosa Island, a barrier island facing the wonderful Gulf of Mexico on one side and a quiet bay on the other, this scenic and unspoiled island is perfect for families. Rent a beach house or a condo like the lovely [Summerwind](#), which has plenty of bedrooms, a full kitchen and a private pool.

Visit the longest fishing pier on the Gulf and have lunch in the restaurant on the pier—but only if you like your seafood so fresh it was swimming an hour ago!

Take the kids to the [Gulf Breeze Zoo](#), one of the nicest zoos for kids I have ever seen, with plenty of walking paths and gentle animals they can pet, and then have some great Mexican food at the [Cactus Flower Café](#).



#### 4. Panama City

When you are ready for an action-packed vacation on the beach, Panama City is the place to go. With beautiful beaches facing the Gulf of Mexico, tons of shopping and restaurants, and plenty of hotels, resorts and beach house rentals, this busy town is a fun place.

To get away from all the hub-bub, try staying at the [Bay Point Wyndham Resort](#). Located just a few miles away from the busy beach area on a quiet and lovely bay, the resort provides a respite from all the action but you can easily drive back to the beach.

Have dinner at the [Spinnaker Beach Club](#) or [Schooners](#) on the beach in Panama City. Both are open-air restaurants with wonderful seafood and are the perfect place to watch the sunset.



#### 5. Pensacola Beach

On the other end of Santa Rosa Island from Navarre Beach, Pensacola Beach is a much busier and active area. Filled with plenty of beach houses, hotels, restaurants and shopping, and with easy access over a

bridge to downtown Pensacola with even more great restaurants and shopping, this is the perfect family vacation spot.

For dinner, be sure to stop in at [Peg Leg Pete's](#) and have a shrimp salad sandwich. Shrimp boats head out from Pensacola every morning and come back at night packed with freshly caught shrimp, so be sure to try this wherever you eat. Or make your own shrimp dinner by heading to [Joe Pattie's](#) and buying your own fresh shrimp!



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## JAN ROSS



After a lifetime of travel, Jan Ross can pack a bag and hit the road with very little notice, although she will always have a little black dress and some snazzy shoes in there. She loves to travel with her husband of more than 35 years as he is a great photographer and she is often way too busy having fun to think about taking pictures. Active travel or relaxing, she is up for it all!

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