

Amelia Island Girlfriend Getaway: The Best Kept Secret in Florida

By: [Jan Ross](#)

Monday, October
15th, 2012



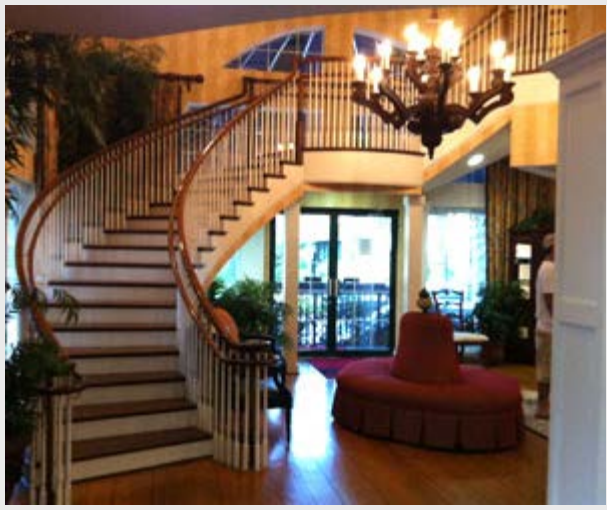
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Before we traveled to lovely and historic [Amelia Island](#) on the Atlantic coast of Florida on a girlfriend getaway, I had never heard of it. Amelia Island is one of the Sea Islands, a chain of barrier islands that reaches along the east coast of the United States all the way from South Carolina to Florida. It's only about 13 miles long and 4 miles wide but it's such a charming place full of beautiful Victorian mansions, you are going to love it.

It's the only location in the United States to have proudly flown eight different flags and, of course, it has the requisite pirate history of most barrier islands. This place comes by that claim quite rightly as the island is located just a short sail from Savannah so it was quite easy to get rid of all those contraband goods in the big city.

There is no long bridge or causeway to get to Amelia Island; you are just driving along and suddenly you find yourself in the middle of the pretty little historic downtown area of Fernandina Beach, complete with shops and restaurants, many of which look like they have been there a hundred years. And some of them have. Considering how small and walkable the downtown area is, they have managed to cram a large number of fabulous places to get your shopping fix. We spent a couple of afternoons browsing through the shops and can recommend [Twisted Sisters](#), a fabulous little shop with clothes, décor, gifts and great jewelry. We bought bags full of extremely reasonably priced jewelry, especially some with an ocean theme which we love.

One of the best places to stay on the island, if you're on a budget but still want nice, is the [Hampton Inn and Suites Amelia Island](#) in Fernandina Beach. We didn't know what to expect when pulled up to this lovely historic hotel located only about a



block from the harbor and a short walk from the shopping district but, when we stepped into the gorgeous lobby, we were immediate fans. The lobby is beautifully decorated with hardwood floors, a fireplace and an incredible staircase winding up to the next floor, like something from "Gone With the Wind". We thought the lobby

could not be topped, but when we entered our large, one bedroom suite we realized we were wrong! We were amazed to see a completely separate bedroom, a very nice living room and a complete kitchen. It is the perfect place for a group of girlfriends. There is even a nice sized balcony overlooking the town or the harbor, depending on which way your room faces. I spent an afternoon lounging by the swimming pool which overlooks the harbor and we really enjoyed the free Continental breakfast every morning. They even provided a very nice lapdesk in the bedroom; something I have never seen in any other hotel.

Aside from shopping and relaxing in our hotel, one of the most interesting things we did was take a cruise of the area with [Amelia River Cruises](#). We walked down to the harbor and boarded the very comfortable, shaded and large boat for the 10:30 a.m. cruise on the Cumberland Harbor. We were excited at the possibility of seeing wildlife along the way, including manatees and wild horses on Cumberland Island. Amelia and Cumberland Island both have rich and interesting histories and the captain/narrator is an expert in telling the stories.



From Fernandina's Beach shrimp boats, historic Old Towne and Ft. Clinch, a fascinating old fort from Civil War times, this tour lets you see it all. We actually saw a quickly submerging manatee and we were absolutely thrilled to see plenty of wild horses on Cumberland Island. I didn't know there were wild horses on any of the barrier islands except those off the coast of Virginia, but they are plentiful on Cumberland Island. The ruins of the Carnegie Dungeoness Mansion on Cumberland were fun to explore and we got a glimpse of the famous and beautiful

Greyfield Inn, where the Kennedy family stayed after John F. Kennedy Jr. was married on Cumberland Island, his childhood favorite place for vacations.

After our cruise, we were starving so we walked back down to the downtown area of Fernandina Beach for lunch on the patio of [Café Karibo](#) where I had a delicious and unique ham and apple sandwich - yum! It was surprisingly pleasant on the patio, even on a warm summer day, as there is often a nice breeze from the harbor.

After relaxing by the quiet and private hotel pool in the afternoon, we drove out

to the beautiful beach area of the island. With a wide assortment of both huge and small beach houses and condos, it should be easy to find the perfect rental for those girlfriends! A big plus on Amelia Island is the availability of public beach access and free parking which is very nice in a beach community.

We decided to check out Sandy Bottoms Beach Bar and Grill (don't you love that name) for dinner and we were so glad we did - it was truly one of the best seafood dinners I have ever eaten and I am a seafood connoisseur. Located right on the beach, you can enjoy a great sunset while consuming some of the best hush puppies I have ever tasted. Seriously, you are going to want a double order!



As we consumed our delicious seafood and watched the sun go down, we marveled over how much we had enjoyed our visit to this lovely little island - which we had never even known existed!

Now, we have shared our secret with you, so head to Amelia Island on your next getaway!

Jan Ross is a freelance travel writer who has been traveling the world since way back before she can even remember. Her dad was in the Marine Corps so she is used to packing up at a moment's notice! She loves writing hotel and restaurant reviews since it means she gets to stay in fabulous places and eat wonderful food. She especially loves writing spa reviews because that means she gets phenomenally pampered and, seriously, who does not like that? She has visited lots of places but still gets a thrill of excitement when she boards a plane, steps into a new hotel room, or sees a new location for the first time. And she hopes that thrill never, ever goes away.

For more information on Jan, visit her website at WanderlustWonder.com.
