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#### ACCOMMODATIONS

Posted by: [Jan Ross](#)

Thursday, April 18, 2013



Navarre Beach in front of Summerwind Resort

Before we arrived at lovely [Navarre Beach](#), we stopped at a Publix grocery on the way to pick up drinks and snacks to stock the fridge in our condo. We stopped before we got to Navarre because the last time I was there several years ago, there was no grocery store. You had to drive to nearby Pensacola or Gulf Breeze if you wanted to pick up groceries.

As we pulled up near the bridge to cross over to the snow white sand of Santa Rosa Island and the gorgeous

Navarre Beach, I was surprised and pleased to see a brand new Publix grocery. This means that, with the incredible beach, fabulous accommodations and small, locally owned restaurants on Navarre Beach, you may never have to leave the area for your whole vacation!

Navarre Beach is located on Santa Rosa Island, just a few miles down from popular Pensacola Beach. I have stayed in both areas over the years and consider Navarre Beach to be superior mainly because it is so lovely, quiet and family-friendly. There are plenty of condos and beach houses to choose from but I suggest you start with [Gulf Blue Vacations](#). Locally owned by some truly nice people and with plenty of gorgeous properties available, we were very happy with the stay at Summerwind Resort they arranged for us.

We had a lovely, large and luxurious three-bedroom condo with an incredible view of the beach and the famous [Navarre Pier](#) – the longest pier on the gulf coast! This would be the perfect place for a family with a full kitchen, dining area and nice living room – and the pool right by the beach is a very nice addition for the kids.

Be sure to head out to that pier where the whole family can spend hours fishing and will probably have a lot of luck. You can rent fishing equipment right on the pier. We saw fisherman pulling in fish after fish – and there's your dinner for tonight! Take a break for lunch and

eat at the restaurant right on the pier – they serve hot, fresh, just-caught

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fish and it's really delicious.

Speaking of eating, there are plenty of great places to eat in Navarre Beach. If you feel like Mexican food, head to the [Cactus Flower Café](#). Tucked away in a little shopping center, they serve California Style Mexican Cuisine. The Mexican food is fresh, flavorful, delicious and healthy. Order the Mango Shrimp Appetizer which is sweet, spicy and wonderful.

Then try the fish tacos; they have a lime sauce that is to die for! We got to sample all the desserts and they are equally fabulous, so be sure to try them all. Or get one of each to take home!

When you ready for more fresh, local seafood, stop by the [Beach Monkey Bar and Grill](#) which is situated right on the beach. Sit on the large deck, try the fried fish and shrimp with a frozen tropical drink and enjoy the incomparable gulf coast sunset.

Navarre Beach is quiet and may seem isolated when you first arrive, but you can easily drive a few minutes in any of several directions and come to a variety of destinations which your family will love. [The Navarre Beach Marine Science Station](#) is located right at the Navarre Beach Park and offers camps and classes for kids to learn more about the marine ecosystem of coastal Florida. When we were there, groups of kids were learning about marine life and kayaking in the gentle bay – and they were having a ball.



Fishing from the Navarre Beach Pier



Giraffe having a snack at the Gulf Breeze Zoo.

Just a few miles away, [The Gulf Breeze Zoo](#) is one of the most kid-friendly zoos we have ever visited. The Walking Path and Petting Zoo has a large petting area, a giraffe feeding station with the friendliest giraffe I have ever seen and a free-flight budgery full of colorful parakeets.

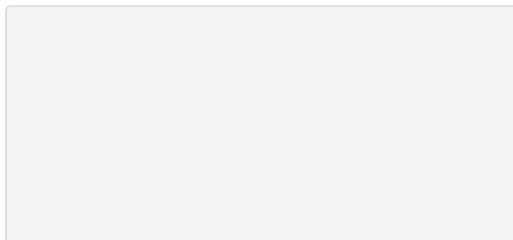
Kids will love the “budgie treat sticks” which are basically Popsicle sticks with bird feed stuck to them. If they hold them out, the brightly colored

birds will land right on their hand. Stroll along the boardwalk, a raised walkway where you watch the more exotic animals, or ride the Safari Limited Train around the beautifully landscaped 30 acre preserve to see chimpanzees, gorillas and huge Nile hippos.

When the family is ready for a day of adventure, take a short drive to [Milton, Florida](#) and spend the whole day at [Adventures Unlimited](#).

For those who want a real adventure, you can [zip line](#) through the trees, over the river and from tower to tower – it's really a blast. Just make sure you are not afraid of heights! Stepping off that first tower is quite an experience. Or you can choose the Challenge Ropes Course

- a great adventure for a group or a family. If you don't feel quite so adventurous, try canoeing, kayaking or tubing down the Blackwater River. The clear, tea-colored water is only about two feet deep with a soft, sandy bottom so it's great for kids. We spent a day canoeing and having a



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picnic on the sandy shore one year and it was a lot of fun.

They also have cabins available or you can choose to camp on the sandy shores of the river and spend time swimming, playing and just enjoying the beautiful area.

After your exhausting and fun day with Adventures Unlimited, head back to your comfortable Summerwind condo at Navarre Beach, sit out on your balcony, watch the sunset – which is splendid every single night, and just spend time enjoying your wonderful family beach vacation.

If you choose to never leave Navarre Beach during your vacation there, the kids will be perfectly happy playing in that gorgeous white sand and splashing in the beautiful gulf coast water while you laze on the beach in your lounge chair.

What a great life!

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For twenty years, I worked as a librarian in an elementary



school but finally decided to get serious about travel writing and devote all my time to it. Now, I travel the world and write all about it. I can't imagine a more fabulous or fulfilling job. I write a regular travel column for two regional, Central Kentucky magazines and contribute regularly to other magazines and online travel sites, such as The SavvyGal, A Luxury Travel Blog and

The Vacation Gals. I'm an avid reader and stay active with Yoga, Pilates and Zumba classes. My favorite place in the whole world is a beach - any beach. I have been married for 34 years and my husband is my favorite travel companion. I also rely on him for his excellent photography skills. We have two grown children and the best grandson in the world. Slowly but surely, we are visiting all the places we have dreamed about. Hopefully, the next one will be the one you want to read about!

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