

PARADISE AVD_SRC_KID-FRIENDLY ITINERARY

Plenty for Pint-Sized Adventurers to Pursue

There's no time for making lifelong memories quite like family time at the beach. This year, we're here to help you kick your family's memory-making into high gear when you visit the turquoise waters, endless beaches, and exciting inland adventures of Navarre Beach and Santa Rosa County. Follow this kid-friendly plan for phone-free family fun and adventures they'll look back on with love for years to come.

Where to Stay: Cottages, Hotels, RV Parks

Accommodations at Navarre Beach and Santa Rosa County run the gamut from national-brand hotels to rental homes and AirBnBs to camping, glamping and RV parks. That makes it simple to choose the stay that fits your family's budget and lifestyle.

With the Gulf Coast's world-famous sugar sand right outside its doors, the beachfront [SpringHill Suites by Marriott Navarre Beach](#) puts your family steps from the Navarre Beach Pier, the longest pier on the Gulf of Mexico. Farther inland, [Coldwater Gardens](#) provides an unparalleled experience your kids will love as they spend the night nestled like birds among moss-draped treetops at The Modern Treehouse while countless stars twinkle to life above.

Newly opened [Splash RV Park](#) near Milton comes complete with its own water park to keep the kiddos cool and busy during the day. At night, your family can stay in your own RV, rent a cottage, or even sleep in an air-conditioned Conestoga wagon!

Day One: Beach bums

Sand and surf

Start your weekend off right by hitting the beach. With seven miles of shimmering sand, Navarre Beach and Santa Rosa County are the perfect place for burying your toes (or the rest of you), building sandcastles, and combing the tide line for interesting seashells. The crystal clear, calm waters of the Gulf make swimming and snorkeling an unforgettable treat. Many of the local beaches are part of protected from development as part of the Gulf Islands National Seashore, so you'll find plenty of unspoiled stretches for exploring – just be sure to follow the rules and carry out anything you carry in to leave the pristine beaches that way for other users, including the sea turtles that flock to the beach in the summer (more on that later). (Learn more here: <https://www.getrelaxing.com/stories/gulf-islands-national-seashore/>)

Poles and the Pier

You in the beach chair – see that structure in the distance jutting way out into the water? That's Navarre Beach Fishing Pier, Florida's longest fishing pier and one of the longest on the entire Gulf of Mexico. At nearly one-third of a mile and 30 feet above the water, the pier has plenty of

space for every angler to try their luck. Rent a pole, buy some bait and try to catch your dinner! The pier is open from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. in summer and is ADA accessible with 16 fishing stations to accommodate disabled visitors. Fishing licenses are included in the cost of admission. The pier is a great place to catch some of the Gulf's most popular species of fish, from king and Spanish mackerel to cobia and pompano.

The pier is also a great place for a stroll and people-watching for those less interested in fishing. The pier's restaurant, Windjammers, has a menu that will meet everyone's needs for lunch or dinner. You can end day one at Navarre Beach Fishing Pier, which is the region's premier spot to catch a stunningly beautiful Gulf sunset every evening. Learn more:

<https://navarrebeachpier.com/>

Day Two: Turtle Time

Sea Turtle Rescue

Start today with a visit to the Navarre Beach Sea Turtle Conservation Center, which sits steps from the beaches where four species of sea turtles visit every Spring and Summer. The center is an interactive, kid-friendly conservation and educational center that introduces visitors of all ages to these amazing animals and their role in the environment. The center also rehabilitates injured turtles. Its 15,000-gallon saltwater tank is home to Sweetpea, an injured green sea turtle that cannot be released back into nature. Sweet Pea's story is a reminder of the risks and the promises that our choices have for these ancient creatures. Learn more:

<https://navarrebeachseaturtles.org/>

Animal Exploration

Sea turtles are just part of the animals your family can discover during a trip to Navarre Beach and Santa Rosa County. It's not every day you get to feed a giraffe, for example. Animal lovers can do exactly that and much more when they visit Gulf Breeze Zoo, located a few minutes west of Navarre Beach. The 50-acre sanctuary houses more than 800 animals in naturalistic settings, from 1-ounce budgie birds to 6,000-pound rhinos. Some you can observe from a distance, others, such as giraffes to alligators, you can feed by hand. Learn more here:

<https://www.gbzoo.com/>

Turtles on the beach

From May to October, sea turtles come ashore to lay their eggs in the sand of Navarre Beach and others. Each female turtle returns to the beach where she was born and can lay hundreds of ping pong ball-sized eggs over the course of a few days. About 60 days later, the eggs hatch at night and the baby turtles rush for the open water following the light of the moon. Each morning, teams patrol the beach looking for fresh nests and marking them to keep visitors from disturbing them accidentally. During your visit to Navarre Beach and Gulf Islands National Seashore, you and your young beachcombers can have the unparalleled experience of witnessing this miracle if you time it right. Just remember to keep your lights turned off at night

to avoid disorienting the hatchlings. Learn more: <https://www.getrelaxing.com/stories/sea-turtle-season-navarre-beach/>

Day Three: Inland Adventure

Take Me to the River

After a couple days of saltwater and sandy toes, it's time to travel inland and spend time in the cool, refreshing waters of the Blackwater River and freshwater springs. Meandering through acres of state forest, the Blackwater River offers miles of kayaking or paddle boarding with breaks on sandy beaches that are ideal stopover spots. The beaches are popular spots for fishing or swimming. Rent your preferred paddlecraft from the outfitters at Adventures Unlimited and spend a lazy day fishing and swimming as you float down the river. Learn more here: <https://adventuresunlimited.com/river-adventures/>

Later, visit Coldwater Gardens to explore the sand hills and pine forests by bike or foot. You'll discover the many animals and plants that call this part of Florida home, including insect-eating pitcher plants sure to set your young scientist's mind racing! Coldwater Gardens is also a great place for a picnic and a dip in the cool, spring-fed Coldwater Creek. Learn more here: <http://coldwatergardens.com/activities/>

Also in Milton, the West Florida Railroad Museum offers up-close opportunities for your pint-sized train buff to explore railroad cars at a historic depot along the former Pensacola and Atlantic railroad line. Your visit will support the continued restoration of this amazing museum. Learn more here: <https://www.wfrm.org/>

Where to eat

Navarre Beach and Santa Rosa County are filled with local, family-friendly restaurants to grab a bite between adventures. Here are a few to choose from for your visit:

Windjammers on the Pier: Located on the Navarre Beach Fishing Pier, the menu includes locally caught seafood, kid favorites like burgers and chicken strips, and amazing views of the Gulf.

Juana's Pagodas & Sailors' Grill: Navarre Beach's oldest family-owned and -operated restaurant sits near the Navarre Beach Fishing Pier on the Navarre Beach Causeway. It offers open-air seating beneath thatch-roofed pagodas with beach access on the sheltered waters of Santa Rosa Sound. The menu includes breakfast, lunch and dinner and classic kid-friendly fare such as chicken strips along with more adult meals.

Grover T.'s BBQ: Named in honor of Santa Rosa County native Grover Thomas and run by his son, this multigenerational staple of Milton's food scene is the perfect place to power up for your afternoon adventures. The menu is a mix of classic Southern flavors, including fried green tomatoes and slow-smoked pulled pork, along with regional favorites like catfish and shrimp

etouffee. Also on offer: hamburgers, chicken tenders and other non-traditional BBQ items. [Learn more here.](#)