

*Designer  
Vacations*

*Community Building  
in Bonita Springs*

*Wild & Wonderful  
Preserves*

# BONITA & ESTERO MAGAZINE

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## BY DESIGN ISSUE

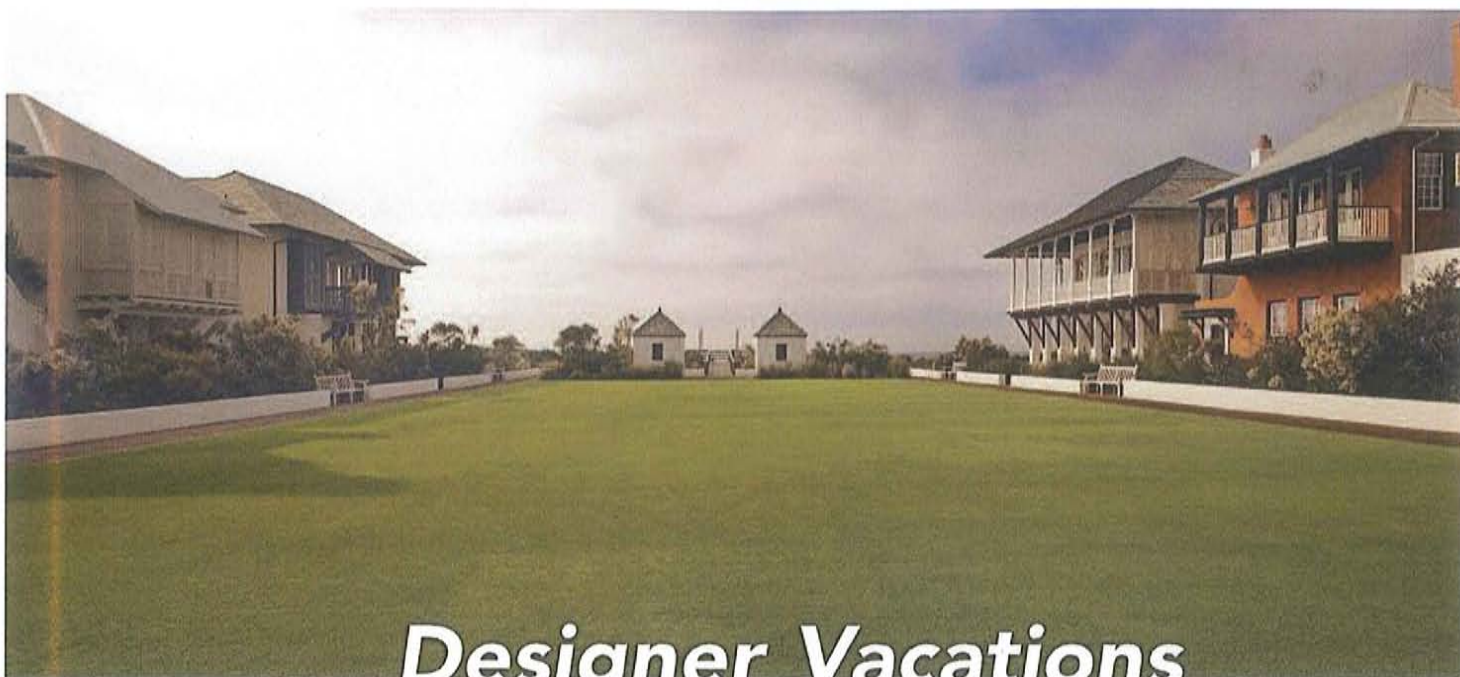
COASTAL DECOR  
GOES CHIC

WEDDINGS WITH  
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CHECKING IN AT  
**GREEN  
GETAWAYS**



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## Designer Vacations

by Chelle Koster Walton

**T**he town of Seaside really started something in Florida's Panhandle. The brainchild of Miami planners Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, it was the first-of-its-kind traditional neighborhood development (TND in town-planning vernacular) and a shining example of Duany's New Urbanism ideals. Its Victorian architecture deeply influenced developments that came later.

When Rosemary Beach executives brought in Duany to plan their community in 1995, they told him what they didn't like about Seaside—namely its day-tripper-clogged, transient nature—and set out to create a TND that eschewed the now-trite Victorian look while still preserving the good in what Seaside offers. Like Seaside, nearby Rosemary Beach is a community of architecturally significant gulf-side homes. A few folks live there year-round, but most of the homes are on a rental program for the greater part of the year.

The community feel creates an ideal safe-retreat atmosphere. A walk around Rosemary Beach's main thoroughfares feels like strolling through an art gallery filled with rows upon rows of works in global styles. It can overload the senses. Each house demands a stop and stare, reminding you of places you've been in

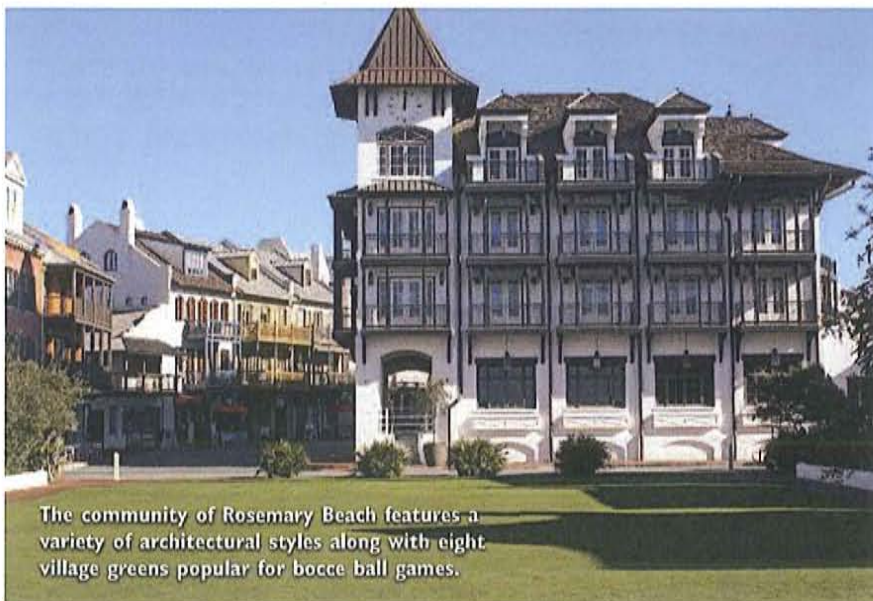
Rosemary Beach re-creates an old-fashioned beach town with a look all its own

a nostalgic way, or places you want to go in a wistful way.

Town architect Frank Greene describes a wide berth in defining architectural styles he will approve for Rosemary Beach. Influences come from colonial St. Augustine, the West Indies, Charleston, and New Orleans.

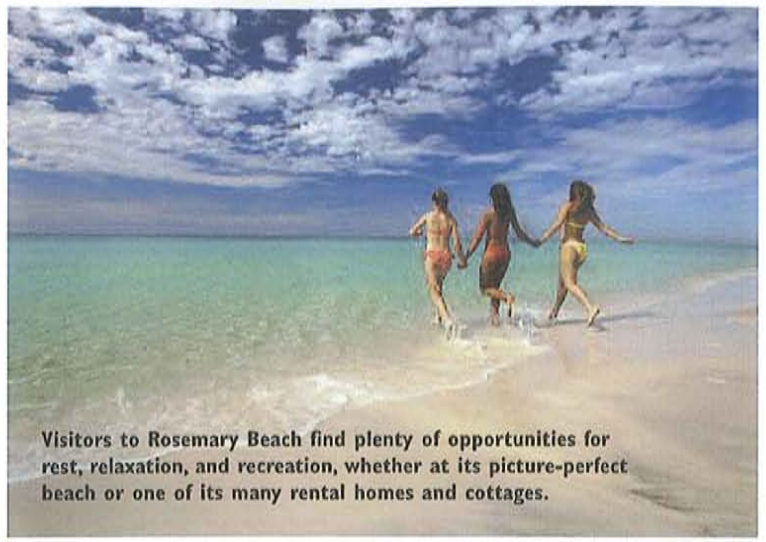
"The commonality is a similar climate: hot and humid," says Greene. "The hip roof and shallow footprint—it's not out of place in North Florida at all."

Named for the wild rosemary Duany found covering the acreage, Rosemary Beach emphasizes the use of native vegetation. Colors used on house exteriors



The community of Rosemary Beach features a variety of architectural styles along with eight village greens popular for bocce ball games.

TOP PHOTO COURTESY OF WALTON COUNTY TDC/BEACHES OF SOUTH WALTON; BOTTOM PHOTO BY CHELLE KOSTER WALTON



Visitors to Rosemary Beach find plenty of opportunities for rest, relaxation, and recreation, whether at its picture-perfect beach or one of its many rental homes and cottages.



must be found in the greenery, berries, flowers, sand, and water of the indigenous landscape. The only non-native vegetation allowed must be planted within courtyard walls. Village greens—golf course-quality lawns provided in eight areas and popular for bocce ball games—are the only grassy spots.

Rosemary Beach building codes also dictate the use of natural, environmentally friendly materials. All pavement is

pervious. Stucco and wood figure importantly into the overall lived-in look.

“With the older style of architecture, it looks like it’s been here,” says Greene. “It feels like a town, not a development. There’s enough variety so there’s not a sameness.”

More than 150 houses, cottages, lofts, flats, townhouses, and carriage houses are in the Rosemary Beach rental program. Each house has a distinct person-

ality, and each accommodation reflects the good taste of its owner, many with a beach-house theme.

In contrast, the Pensione, a Euro-style inn, boasts eleven stark rooms of cinderblock walls and minimalist decor. An Italian eatery, Onano Neighborhood Café, occupies floor one. It is one of eleven food outlets in Rosemary Beach’s town center, which is never more than a five-minute walk away from any abode.

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Photos by Jessica Must Photography

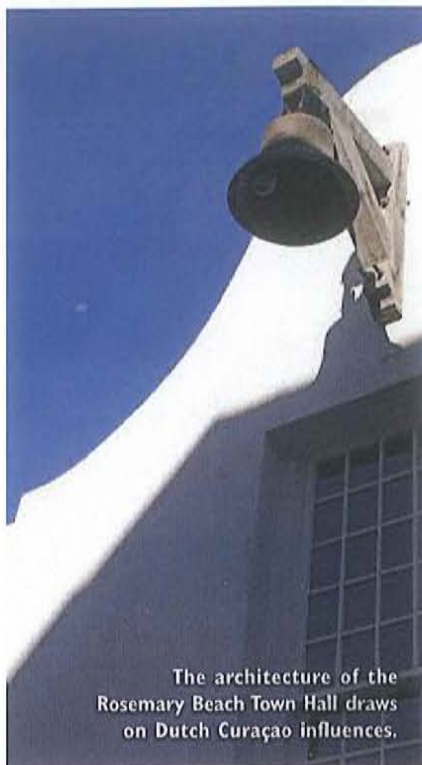
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## Getaways



The architecture of the Rosemary Beach Town Hall draws on Dutch Curaçao influences.

Restaurant Paradis, the newest eatery, feels and tastes like New Orleans.

Shops range from a day spa and aesthetics clinic to Rosemary Beach Trading Company, with its inventory of fun signs, logo wear, and decor items. "The art I carry is a reflection of how we live in this community," says Ann Hunter, owner of World Six Studio Gallery. "It's kind of a Bohemian lifestyle with a great work ethic."

Lofts above the shops on the town's north side ensure a lively downtown vibe. On the south side, the post office (Rosemary Beach has its own zip code) and town hall project a certain Dutch Curaçao flair.

The to-do list for vacationers at Rosemary Beach amounts to beach- and sports-related activities. Boardwalks lead to crossovers taking you from nearly forty-foot-high dune peaks to sea level at a beach incomparable for beauty, softness, and sheer whiteness. The most luxuriously clear green waters lap lazily at the sands, ungroomed in the spirit of allowing nature to prevail. A beach of this caliber is reason enough to want to spend an escape weekend at Rosemary Beach. You can rent a kayak or sailboat if you decide to do more than relax, a beach chair or hammock if not.

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The racquet club and its eight clay courts are top-notch. Daily clinics and lessons draw participants from miles around. Four swimming pools and a fitness center complete the recreational amenities. Developers hope to begin construction on an art and outdoor performance facility this year.

Beyond the confines of Rosemary Beach, whose 107 acres embrace Scenic Route 30A on both sides, the stretch of coastline known as South Walton County reveals some of Florida's best natural attractions and finest dining. Rent a bike (new, but clunky) at Rosemary Beach's Bamboo Bicycle Company to reach Deer Lake State Park, about four miles away along a hilly (by Florida standards) paved bike path. Here lies a world of reindeer lichen, goldenrod, sea oats, rolling dunes, and preserved beach pressed like a wildflower between exclusive developments.

Nearby, Grayton Beach State Park, rated as one of the nation's top beaches, presents a mixed-media nature world of sand, coastal dune lakes, and pine forest. Between the whiteness and height of the sand, it somehow makes for a disorienting impression of snowy mountains, but for the sea and sunny warmth.

In winter, temperatures drop to cool and cooler. High season ends Labor Day, which makes our long, hot falls an ideal time to visit. For Southwest Floridians who wish to escape to a different climate without buying snow boots, the Panhandle puts out. Not only is the climate different, but Northwest Florida is as removed as anything across the border. The accent, hospitality, and food are deeper south.



Eleven restaurants can be found in Rosemary Beach's town center, offering everything from seafood to Southern cuisine.

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## Getaways

Rosemary Beach draws vacationers from Atlanta as well as Tampa and Tallahassee. They all find some of the most gorgeous beaches possible, blessed with the whiteness of angels because they are created from quartz sand, rather than coral as in most parts of Florida.

Walton County, where Rosemary Beach and Seaside reside, develops smartly. Sandwiched between touristy Destin and Panama City Beach, it keeps its integrity with an eye to the environment and a planned charm. Resorts and neighborhoods are upscale without pretension. Buildings can't rise more than fifty feet. Restaurants offer incredible variety and virtuosity in a region traditionally known more for its hush puppies than its escargot.

Rosemary Beach sits pretty here in a cadre of Old Florida meets Florida reinvented. It's ideal for nature lovers craving a well-designed escape and a sense of community. 🐾

*Chelle Koster Walton is the cuisine and travel editor for TOTI Media.*



### If You Go

Bamboo Bicycle Company  
850-231-0770,  
bamboobicyclecompany.com

Deer Lake State Park  
850-267-8300, florida  
stateparks.org/deerlake

Grayton Beach State Park  
850-267-8300, florida  
stateparks.org/graytonbeach

Onano Neighborhood Café  
850-231-2436, onanocafe.com

Pensione Inn  
850-231-1790, rosemarybeach.com

Restaurant Paradis  
850-534-0400, restaurantparadis.com

Rosemary Beach Cottage Rentals  
888-855-1551, rosemarybeach.com

Rosemary Beach Trading Company  
850-231-2410, rbtradingcompany.com

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