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JUNE 2009 U.S. \$4.99



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It may be known for shuttle launches and surfer dudes, but there are many more reasons why locals love Cocoa Beach and historic Cocoa Village.

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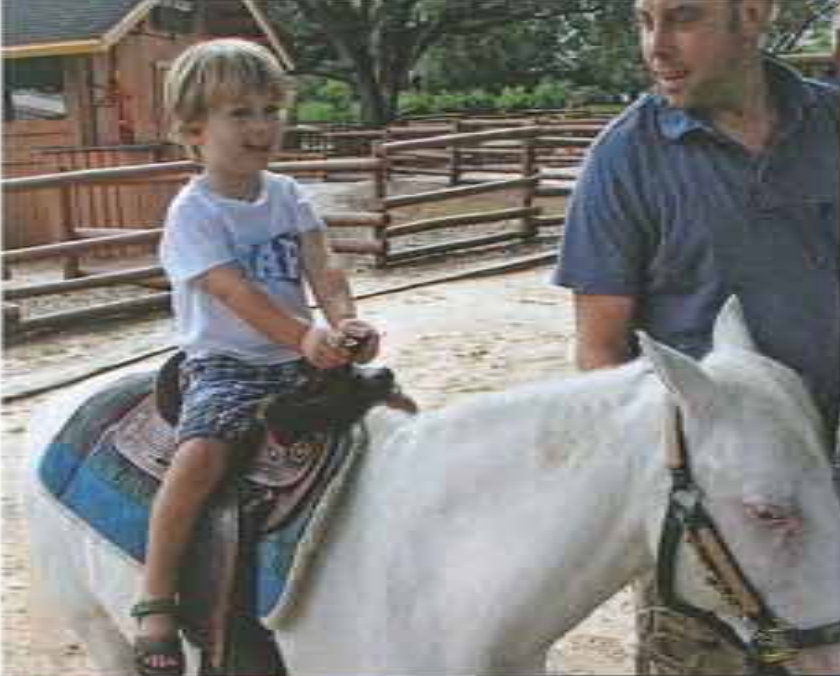
Our fave new fish shack on the Gulf, sushi with a Brazilian influence, celebrity chef Todd English opens a Fort Lauderdale restaurant, plus the best steakhouses and lunch counters.

96 u-turn

Coppertone's pigtails icon and her playful pup return to Miami's Biscayne Boulevard.



FLORIDA TRAVEL + LIFE (ISSN 1535-2790) Volume 5, Issue 40 is published seven times a year: January, February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December by Bonnier Corporation, PO Box 8500, Winter Park, FL 32782. Standard postage paid at Winter Park and additional mailing offices. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the express written permission of Florida Travel + Life magazine. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Florida Travel + Life, PO Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Publications Mail Agreement Number: 40612608. Canada Post Returns: BCL PO Box 25542, London ON, M6C 6B2, Canada. **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** In the US, \$19.97 per year. Add \$6.00 per year plus GST for delivery to Canada and \$18.00 per year for delivery to all other foreign countries. All payments in U.S. funds only. For subscription information, call 866.836.7885 or 386.246.3335. Occasionally, we make portions of our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services we think may be of interest to you. If you do not want to receive these offers, please advise us at 866.836.7885 or 386.246.3335. **THE PAPER** used for this magazine comes from certified forests that are managed in a sustainable way to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of present and future generations.



cottage living



ROSEMARY BEACH

Tucked away in North Florida on pillow-puff sand dunes laced with Florida scrub sits **Rosemary Beach**, a charming New Urbanist community — everything is within walking distance of everything else — that sits on a quiet stretch of shoreline facing the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico. A web of artfully landscaped footpaths and boardwalks weave through a town center inspired by the Dutch West Indies and stops at the beach. There is tidiness in this town, its streets lined with tin-roofed beach cottages, each with its own patio or porch but just steps from the next, prompting interaction with neighbors. As one resident told us, "If you walked around here with an empty wine glass, you couldn't take 10 steps before someone filled it for you."

EVENING ENTERTAINMENT>> If kids don't make pals while tumbling the emerald-green lawns scattered around the property, they usually do during a pottery-painting class at Camp Rosemary. Twice a week, the camp organizes nighttime events, so grown-ups can sip chardonnay in peace on the terrace at **Courtyard Wine and Cheese**, which feels like a sidewalk café somewhere in Europe.

A STONE'S THROW>> Perhaps our favorite thing about this place: no need to overpack. Fully equipped cottages come with laundry facilities and entertainment centers. Pick up kites, skim boards and crab nets at **Bamboo Beach**. (Ask where you can search for blue crabs in the pools of water that form just offshore. With a good eye, you'll scoop up a crustacean or two.) Or ride away with a beach cruiser or tandem bike from **Bamboo Bicycle** next door. For an afternoon snack break, there's **Sugar Shak**, where candy displays look as if they were arranged by Willy Wonka. And if you aren't up to the rigors of making dinner, pick up oven-ready meals such as mac and cheese at **Cowgirl Kitchen**. But don't worry if the kids don't eat. Remember, you're on vacation. rosemarybeach.com — PATRICIA LETAKIS & CAROLINA A. MIRANDA

Summer rates from \$250 for a six-person carriage house. See opposite page for package details.

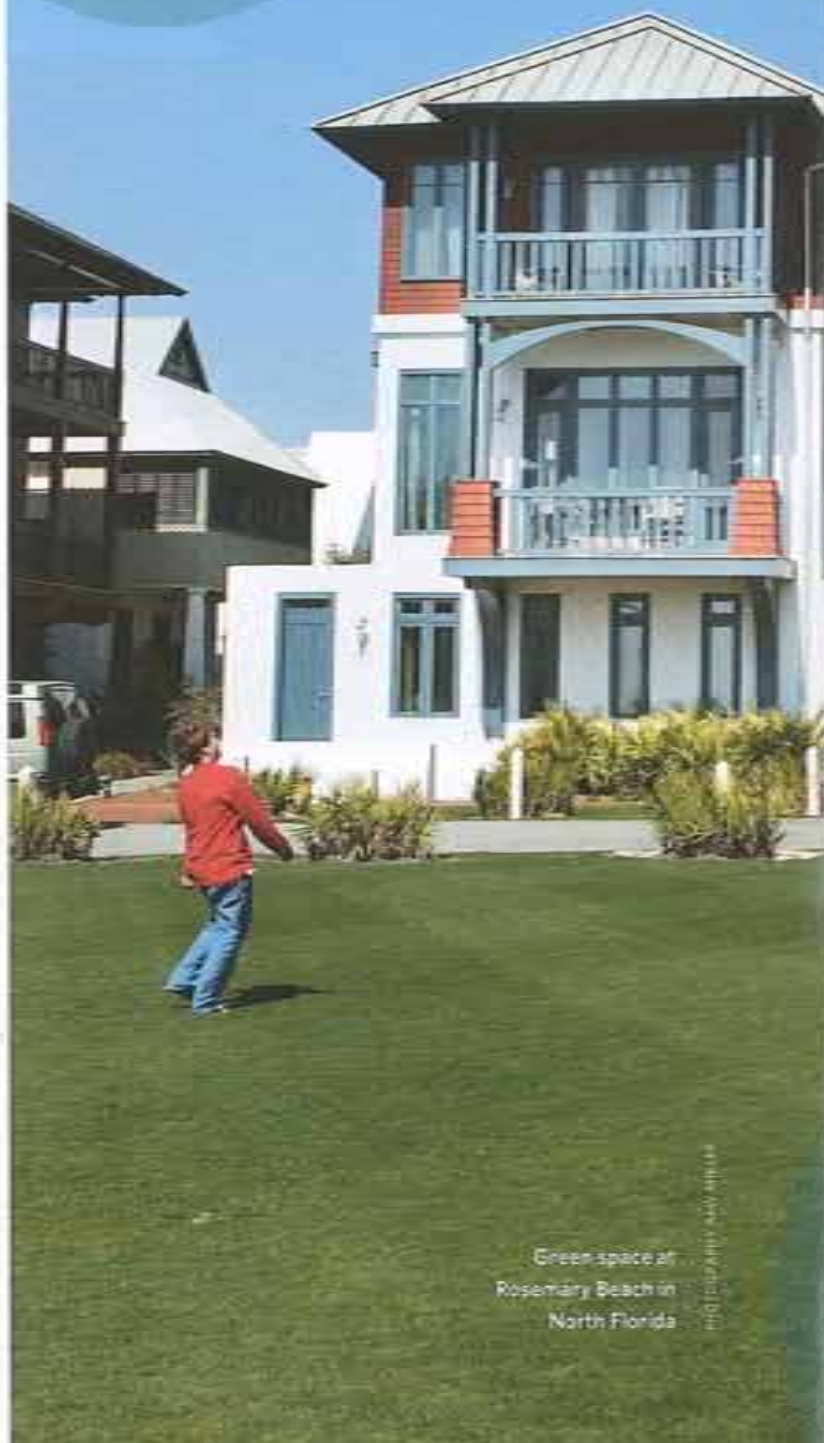
natural surprise

VERO BEACH

When it comes to palm trees, Al Smith knows his silver bismarck from his red feather. Surprisingly, his volunteer gig at **McKee Botanical Garden in Vero Beach** has also provided perspective on what turns on kids. "Dinosaurs!" he exclaims playfully, referring to the reptile exhibit that drew a whopping 40,000 people to the garden last fall (it returns in November). The spectacled enthusiast is eager to introduce the master gardeners who spend Saturday mornings at McKee's entrance, answering locals' gardening questions. "You'd be surprised how many folks come by with their kids," Smith says.

A delightful garden — one of the state's first roadside attractions — and an engaged and family-friendly community are just two of the many pleasant surprises for those who visit this little-known beach town halfway between Palm Beach and Cocoa Beach. On Saturdays, a bustling farmers market is a showcase for flip-flop-clad families buying fresh seafood from **Captain Jerry's** as well as delicate flowers

NEW Miami Metro Zoo's (miamimetrozoo.com) new "Amazon and Beyond" exhibition features jaguars, giant river otters and anacondas, while at the Naples Zoo (caribbeangardens.com) "Black Bear Hammock" just made its debut.



Green space at
Rosemary Beach in
North Florida

PHOTOGRAPHY: NADY ANTON

ON STAGE This summer, the Dr. Seuss classic *Go, Dog, Go!* comes to life at WaterColor's Marina Park Amphitheater in North Florida every Tuesday from May 26-Aug. 11 (seasiderep.org). Down south, the for-kids-by-kids Miami Children's Theater (miamichildrenstheater.com) performs Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* throughout May.



GREAT SUMMER DEALS NOT TO PASS UP

>> **THE NAPLES BEACH HOTEL & GOLF CLUB's** two-night "Family Fun Package" includes breakfast buffet for four each day, morning kids-club activities, beach setup complete with pails and shovels, and an extra hour of boating or tennis. From \$500. May 26-Oct. 1. naplesbeachhotel.com

>> Stay three nights at **TRADEWINDS ISLAND RESORT IN ST. PETERSBURG**, and earn two day passes to the three-story water slide, a \$100 credit for all kids activities, a 20 percent discount at all 15 restaurants on property and a beach bag. From \$627. Through Sept. 30. tradewindsresort.com

>> Reducing the standard weekly requirement of most rental properties to a four-night minimum, **ROSEMARY BEACH COTTAGE RENTAL COMPANY's** summer package of \$250 per night for a six-person carriage house is a steal. From May 23 through Aug. 15. rosemarybeach.com

All paths lead to
the Gulf of Mexico
in Rosemary
Beach. Opposite:
Kayaking through
the mangroves
is a Vero Beach
tradition.

