



REAL.FUN.BEACH.NEW

Long known for its emerald-green waters and sugar white sandy shores, Panama City Beach continues to thrive – which is apparent by the recent significant growth and investment in the destination. With a host of new attractions, activities and entertainment options, the REAL.FUN.BEACH. offers something fun for everyone.

THE BEACH WITHIN REACH

Perhaps the greatest example of this growth has been the remarkable success of the Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP), which celebrated its 1st anniversary this past May. Replacing the 61-year-old Panama City-Bay County International Airport, it was the first publicly funded international airport to be built from the ground up in the United States in over a decade.

Daily non-stop flights are now available to Baltimore, Houston, Nashville, Orlando and Atlanta. With Delta Airlines continuing flight service to the destination and the addition of Southwest Airlines, the airport has proven to be a catalyst in attracting new travelers to the Gulf Coast. Serving 800,000 passengers in the last year, the current traffic at Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport is three times greater than the former Panama City airport saw annually. Furthermore, it has decreased the average per flight fare by approximately thirty percent, making Panama City Beach's beaches more accessible to travelers across the entire country.

NEW ATTRACTIONS

Pier Park

Often referred to as the heart of Panama City Beach, Pier Park is an open-air regional lifestyle center spanning more than one million square feet, located directly across from Panama City Beach's famous sugar-white sand beaches. Opened in 2008 as Northwest Florida's largest shopping, dining and entertainment venue, Pier Park boasts restaurants and stores comprised of a colorful mix of popular national chains and favorite locally owned boutiques and eateries.

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REAL.FUN.BEACH.NEW/2

One of the most distinctive and beloved additions to the district is **Miracle Strip @ Pier Park**, an attraction that features some of the original rides from the former and iconic Miracle Strip Amusement Park, which was open in Panama City Beach from 1963 to 2004. The 1964 Allen Herschall carousel, featuring 30 horses and two chariots, the classic 1975 Big Eli Ferris Wheel with a magnificent view of the Gulf of Mexico, Scrambler and a Tilt-a-Whirl are among the rides which have been fully restored for their new home at Pier Park. The park is open year-round for visitors seeking nostalgic rides with a feel from yesteryear and beautiful landscaping.

A new addition for kids and young at heart is the new **Butterfly Pavilion at Pier Park**, a 2,500-square-foot pavilion featuring more than 400 fluttering butterflies in a colorful, flower-filled habitat. All of the butterflies are native to Florida, including Painted Ladies, Giant Swallowtails, Monarchs, Zebra Longwings, Great Southern Whites, Zebra Swallowtails and many more. The pavilion exhibits the full butterfly life cycle, from egg, caterpillar, cocoon and butterfly stages.

The latest newcomer to the district is the **IMAX Grand Theatre at Pier Park**. The retrofitted theater offers the high-tech sensory experience for up to 350 moviegoers with the latest IMAX 3-D films.

Gulf World Marine Park

In Spring 2011, Panama City Beach's landmark marine park welcomed the **arrival of a two-year-old male bottlenose dolphin**, which was rescued earlier in the year from Grand Isle, Louisiana. The dolphin, which now goes by the name Roux, was rehabilitated by the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas and deemed un-releasable due to his age and absence of survival skills. The Gulf World team traveled to New Orleans to transport him to Panama City Beach, where he is currently being socialized with the park's other dolphins, Roux has become a great addition to the educational programs, which allow patrons to get up close and personal with dolphins, sea lions, parrots, reptiles, live shark and turtle feedings and more. Gulf World, which was originally established in 1969, has managed to maintain an intimate environment that is refreshingly rare for today's marine parks and zoos.

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ZooWorld

ZooWorld is home to more than 200 exotic animals, and visitors can now catch a glimpse of **two young snow white Bengal tigers**. Rajastan and his sister Tahan were born in the summer of 2011 and have delighted visitors to the zoo ever since. The snow-white cubs are an extremely rare subset of the Bengal tiger species, which is native to India, Bangladesh and Nepal and now endangered. Arranged photo sessions with the tiger cubs are currently available for an additional cost.

NEW ACTIVITIES

Panama City Beach Pirates Soccer Team

Playing their first season in 2012, the Panama City Beach Pirates are a highly competitive soccer team playing in the United Soccer League, as part of the Premier Development League's Southeast Division. The Pirates will place a total of 16 games from May through June, including eight home game matches at Gavlak Stadium. Throughout the year the organization will provide numerous opportunities for players of all ages through camps, clinics, tournaments and special events.

Panama City Beach Conservation Park and Gayle's Trails

Twelve years ago, Panama City Beach officials decided to launch an effort to rehydrate thousands of acres of protected wetlands through the development of a 2,900-acre conservation park. Opened in October 2011, outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy miles of walking and biking trails. The park also includes beautiful boardwalks, bridges, picnic areas and an outdoor classroom. In the planning of the conservation park, Mayor Gayle Oberst envisioned the development of a scenic park to include a walking trail system that could be utilized for city residents and guests. As a result, Gayle's Trails at the Panama City Beach Conservation Park was born. Similar paths already exist across Panama City Beach, and the plan is to link them together into an unbroken trail system that will stretch from the Walton County line to St. Andrews State Park.

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Russell-Fields Pier

Renovated and reopened in 2009, the Russell-Fields Pier (City Pier) extends approximately 1,500 feet over the beautiful emerald-green waters of the Gulf, making it a prime spot for fishing or a leisurely walk. With rod rentals and tackle available on site, visitors and locals can fish along the pier for cobia, king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, flounder, redfish and pompano year round. This year, four huts were constructed at the base, housing various shops; a convenience store with sundries and beach apparel; a beach photo hut for professional photographs on the beach; an airbrush t-shirt booth; and the Snack Shack selling snow cones, hot dogs, ice cream and other beach-friendly fare. Also located in Panama City Beach is the M.B. Miller Pier (County Pier), which was renovated in 2010 and is a twin to Russell-Fields Pier.

About Panama City Beach:

Panama City Beach is situated on 27 miles of sugar-white sand beaches bordering clear, emerald-green waters where the Gulf of Mexico and St. Andrew Bay converge. With more than 300 days of sunshine annually and attractions such as St. Andrews State Park and Pier Park, the region has long been favored by travelers seeking an affordable beach vacation with year-round offerings for families, couples, groups and adventure-seekers. These include championship golf courses, spas, sporting events, award-winning dining and diverse recreational activities. Panama City Beach recently opened the new Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport, offering non-stop flights on Delta Airlines and Southwest Airlines. For more information, call 850-233-5070 or visit the official Web site of the Panama City Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau, www.visitpanamacitybeach.com.

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